

After a narrow vote at the Special Delegate Conference the miners have returned to work. Although the NUM is still intact and miners preserved their dignity, the Tories and the NCB are determined to press home their victory. In order to strengthen resistance militant miners have established the Militant Miners' Initiative.

## On to the Miners' Militant Movement

Jack Conrad

THE MINERS' STRIKE was undoubtedly a Great Strike. One day it may well come to be seen as even more significant than the 1926 General Strike.

The Tories were prepared to spend billions of pounds in order to win the dispute with the miners. Not because they were determined to make the coal industry profitable — after all, given what they have spent already there is little hope of recouping it even via privatisation, and if they wanted to make unprofitable pits profitable this could have been easily achieved by channelling in that money. No, it is crystal clear that the Tories were out to break the NUM as an effective union so that the capitalist class can launch a concerted offensive against the working class as a whole. With the NUM down, what section of the working class could stand against the drive to increase the rate of exploitation, they reason?

So the miners' strike is a taste of things to come: other workers including the miners again will be forced to fight back. It was, therefore, not as left reformist Ron Todd hopefully declared, a strike the likes of which will not be seen again for a hundred years. Everything suggests it was the heroic beginning of a sustained period of class war the lessons of which we must learn and learn quickly.

The prospect of bitter class war allows no wishful thinking; the idea that the miners somehow won a magnificent victory as Tony Benn claimed was not surprisingly greeted with Tory laughter and mockery in Parliament. In the class war truth has to be confronted no matter how painful — the miners have suffered an important defeat; yes there was a heads held high return to work but there was also a retreat which has left the miners to the mercy of the NCB. Already miners in Kent are reporting to us the dictatorial management since the end of the strike. In Doncaster we have been told of the management curtailing time off for union work, not allowing face workers the established time for washing, and cutting out wet money. While in Lancashire there have been deliberate provocations in an attempt to break the overtime ban, and in Scotland the stark proof of defeat can be seen in the refusal to reinstate any men sacked during the course of the strike.

So despite Arthur Scargill's brave talk it is obvious that while the NUM is intact it was out-gunned and out-generalled by the bourgeois state. Arthur ought to be honest; there has been no victory, only defeat. If it were anything else why is he now so eager to accept the rotten Nacods deal in its entirety when late last year he was denouncing it as a sell out?

In an attempt to cover the extent of the defeat the NUM NEC and Scargill now say that closures and redundancies can be fought pit by pit

using 'guerrilla' tactics. But miners know that in the past all localised campaigns failed. Why should it be any different now that the NUM has been defeated after 12 months on strike, now that the NCB is picking off militants, opening the way for privatisation, and lording it over the workforce. Surely such localised 'guerrilla' campaigns only invite isolation and victimisation?

It is clear to us that although the strike was in part defeated by the downright treachery of trade union bigwigs, left and right, the NUM leadership cannot escape responsibility. Scargill, despite his brilliant tactics, his intransigence proved at the end of the day to have nothing in the way of a strategy beyond miners gritting their teeth and seeing the strike into 1986 — in other words no strategy. This political failure has been magnified in defeat and the miners who fought with such courage and determination during the 12 months are now suffering the bitter consequences of this failure.

But in the midst of the confusion of defeat has come the prospect of regroupment. A number of militant miners have formed a Militant Miners' National Initiative and are beginning to discuss the need for a Miners' Militant Movement along the lines of the Miners' Minority Movement of the 1920s. They are out to ensure that not only will the union stand up for those sacked and imprisoned, but above all they are determined that the miners will never again suffer such a humiliating defeat. They intend to see to it that the NUM is transformed into a genuine fighting class organisation which can achieve unity and victory.

This is a very welcome development, one that is wholeheartedly supported by this paper and its supporters. With a Miners' Militant Movement we believe the miners can overcome the present disorganisation and fragmentation that plagues their union. A MMM provides the key to winning the miners to fight and to fight and win. It is to assist the process of clarification in the vital preparatory period that we present our thoughts on the broad principles and major demands we consider essential for the success of a MMM. Of course how things turn out in practice will be decided by the militant miners themselves, determined by the tempo of the class struggle and the course of history.

With this in mind we think it is very important to make it abundantly clear from the start that a MMM is not a rival to the NUM or a split. Its aim must be to strengthen the NUM by organising its best elements across area and sectional divisions. By organising the progressive minority, those committed to the class war and the struggle for socialism, the way can be open for the transformation of the NUM. By their joint effort the NUM can be placed on a war footing. Through winning the leadership of the union not only will they be able to develop the strategy to beat off the

capitalist offensive but they can initiate a united working class front which can turn defence against the bosses into offence by the working class as a whole.

To facilitate this a MMM should constantly look to and encourage other workers to form their own Militant Movements seeking to unite them into a National Militant Movement. In this way the class traitors who dominate the TUC can be challenged and a genuine general staff of the trade union movement created.

The ideal basis for the MMM would naturally be NUM lodges themselves. This is possible even now in a number of areas but it is essential that the militant minorities in Notts, Midlands, Lancashire, etc. are integrated. So provision should be made for their representation even on an individual basis. Part and parcel of the MMM gaining ground will be the overcoming of the damaging uneven development of militancy in the NUM, through a dynamic MMM the present isolation of militants in areas like Notts can be overcome and the right wing sectional hold broken.

It is obvious that a MMM will campaign around a number of immediate issues resulting from the aftermath of the strike. We consider the most pressing:

- The fight against victimisation. A MMM should insist that all sacked miners get their jobs back — including those sacked for so-called serious offences.

- Prisoners. A MMM must demand an amnesty for all imprisoned miners. It must ensure that all possible aid is given to class war prisoners including of course their jobs back on release.

- Wages. The question of wages must not be linked to the precondition of ending the overtime ban. Wage claims should not be presented on the basis of the *Plan for Coal* or what the NCB can afford but on what the miners need for a full life.

- Pit closures. They cannot be fought on a local level. A MMM must take a lead in making resistance to any closure a matter for all areas and all miners.

But there are other questions which the Militant Miners' National Initiative should seriously consider as central to the formation of a MMM.

- The fight for industrial unionism. The NUM is in many ways an industrial union — one which organises all workers in a particular industry. But it is in crucial areas incomplete. In the mining industry there are APEX members, supervisors in Nacods, TGWU and GMBATU opencast workers. All these need to be organised under the banner of one union. This would be an important blow against sectionalism in the mining industry; a sectionalism which saw Nacods members stay

at work while the NUM was on strike.

- Sectionalism. This not only relates to making the NUM into a truly industrial union but reforming the NUM itself. The present gothic structure inherited from 1945, which gives the Yorkshire Area with around 60,000 members three seats on the NEC compared with one for the practically defunct Cumberland Area, must be swept aside in order to overcome deeply ingrained sectionalism.

- Democracy. All officials should be elected and subject to recall. If they are full time officials they should only receive the pay of the average faceworker. A MMM should follow the dictum that the rank and file will support leaders only as long as and as much as they fight for the interests of the working class as a whole.

The most important question facing militant miners is whether they want to build a genuine rank and file movement committed to class war or whether to content themselves with being a broad left. Many will rightly say that the NUM is already dominated by the broad left and this did not stop defeat. What is more they can point to the broad left windbags in the NUR, Aslef, NUS, Tass, and the TGWU, etc. who for one year sat by while the miners battled with riot police and their union was legally bankrupted. The broad left fronts have been no better. The Liaison Committee could only manage a day of action on a Sunday during the entire year of the strike and BLOC could not even do that.

Militant miners should not only be sceptical about broad lefts they should firmly reject them. They are thoroughly reformist in aim, electoral in practice, and therefore useless when it comes to meaningful industrial solidarity or even defending their own members' pay and jobs in the demanding conditions of the 1980s. The broad lefts are election machines for careerists, not working class fighting organisations.

What the working class needs today and most certainly what the embattled miners need is a genuine rank and file movement committed to socialism explicitly rejecting reformism. Militant miners who for twelve months were on the receiving end of the riot police, the asset-seizing courts, and the prisons should have few illusions if any about the state. For them it has been exposed for the class institution it is. The scabbing role of Kinnock and Willis, the failure of all the union tops to turn TUC promises into reality, and the impotence of the broad lefts demands a new tradition. We are confident militant miners will not content themselves with the illusions of reformism.

We wish the Militant Miners' National Initiative every success. On to the Miners' Militant Movement!





## THE LENINIST

### After Chernenko

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Soviet Union is the most influential party in the world communist movement and the Soviet Union is of course the world's revolutionary centre. Because of this the selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the CPSU is an important event not just for communists in the Soviet Union but for communists throughout the world.

There is a general recognition that in terms of age comrade Gorbachev represents a break with the past; after all, the average age of the Politbureau which elected him is 70, the Central Committee's 300 members have an average age of 66, and he is 'only' 54. But as well as younger leaders what is needed is a questioning of many doctrines inherited from the days of Stalin. Certainly the highly bureaucratic mechanisms used in the 1930s to industrialise the Soviet Union now stand as a block to turning quantitative production into qualitative production, a block that cannot be removed by tinkering reforms but by the thorough democratisation of all aspects of Soviet life. Without this and the full application of the Marxist-Leninist theory and practice of world revolution the best hopes and intentions of comrade Gorbachev will be undermined.

The current programme (adopted in 1961) of the CPSU states as a "solemn promise" that the Soviet Union would have achieved the material foundations for communism by 1980 and that the Soviet Union would have overtaken the USA ten years earlier. That this programme is to be revised is understandable to say the least; but it is essential that its underlying assumption, that the Soviet Union by its own efforts alone and without any relation to the world revolution can achieve communism, is rejected and the aim of world revolution, for Marx and Lenin the precondition for communism, is resurrected. This would of course in turn necessitate the CPSU intervening in the ideological battles that are raging inside so many CPs in the advanced capitalist nations. It would mean ceasing to turn a blind eye to the process of social democratisation taking place within so many CPs because of the so-called 'principle' of the non-interference in the internal affairs of fraternal parties, a "principle" which while characteristic of the Second International was considered an anathema by the founders of the Third (Communist) International.

Only by fighting to democratise the Soviet Union internally, placing the aim of world revolution at the centre of all political strategies, can the threat of world war be truly ended, and communism realised. To the extent that comrade Gorbachev works along these lines we will support him: this is our internationalist duty. We Leninists are not fairweather friends, sycophants, or neo-God-builders. We will defend the Soviet Union unconditionally because it is such an important gain for the world's working class; and because we are genuine friends we will also openly voice our disagreements and criticisms, as it is also our internationalist duty.

*The Editor*

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### SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

(12 issues, one year)

Britain and Ireland £5.00, Institutions £7.00.

Europe £8.00, Institutions £10.00.

All other countries £10.00, Institutions £12.00

### BACK COPIES:

Issues 1- 6 (theoretical journal) £1.00 each plus 25p p&p; complete set £5.00 inc p&p.

Single issues of paper (from issue 7) 30p each plus 10p p&p.

All cheques payable to *The Leninist*.

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Printed and typeset by Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU), 439 North Woolwich Road, LONDON E16. Published by The Leninist Publications. ISSN 0262-1619.

## LETTERS

### Reservations

I am intensely interested in the conduct and outcome of the inner-Party struggle being presently waged; I feel closer to *The Leninist* than any other organ or group in or out of the CPGB, although I have some reservations about your paper's attitude to the Soviet Union in relation to Poland and Afghanistan. With regard to the latter, am I wrong in thinking that you favour Amin and thereby repudiate Babrak Karmal's press statement of 21/1/80 to the effect:

"... The leadership of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan have indisputable documentary evidence, including Amin's personal letters and records, which show that this agent of Imperialism and the CIA would not have hesitated to annihilate half of Afghanistan's population to further the imperialists' objectives. Amin and his followers carried out CIA assignments and, forging an alliance with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and other leaders of counter-revolutionary organisations hiding in Pakistan and maintaining contacts with Israeli secret services, planned to carry out a bloody coup in Kabul late in December 1979, and physically destroy most Party members, intellectuals and army officers. If Amin and his clique had not been exposed and stopped in time, Afghanistan would have been plunged into a tragedy like that which took place in Chile when a fascist junta seized power there, or in Kampuchea when power in that country was usurped by the Pol Pot clique."

How many Communists connected with *The Leninist* have read the Novosti Press Agency's book *The Truth About Afghanistan*, for in the complex situation both in Afghanistan and Poland there has been a constant battery of bourgeois lies and misinformation sustained not only by the obvious capitalist media but by their allies in *Militant* and similar pseudo-revolution-

ary trash — extending to the Eurocommunists of the CPGB and to a lesser extent by the *Morning Star*?

With regard to the Soviet Union's attitude to the Polish dilemma, they could be faulted perhaps for not 'interfering' earlier in the CIA-Solidarnosc planned counter-revolution, and their stern warning to the Polish Workers' Party that the re-establishment of capitalism in Poland would not be tolerated was an eleventh hour business and almost on the brink of being too late. The infiltration of the PUWP by Vatican and CIA agents must, in my opinion, be on quite a colossal scale, and in posts of power, when Poland can scab on the militant working class such as the British miners, and when Poland still holds seventy per cent of its agriculture in private hands, when also in spite of the socialist control of the press and media there are still millions who obey a reactionary mediaeval Catholic Church. If that is 'The Polish Road to Socialism', like its corresponding British variety, it will lead to God-knows-where and Tib's Eve when we reach it.

I would like more clarity on your attitude to Poland and Afghanistan. Another point: what about a Communist Party of Scotland, in alliance with a CP of Wales and a CP of England? The CPGB is an archaic concept. Britain is no longer 'great' in the imperial sense that bestowed this jingoistic and boastful title. Britain is presently only 'great' in the depth of its reaction to human progress and world peace; it is great in its capacity for evil and its immense national conceit which has more than a little of the Englishman's 'über alles' in its composition. Indeed, it is quite akin to Germanic arrogance and Yankee bigheadedness. Britain is only great in that it provides its American and Zionist masters with the largest nuclear aircraft carrier afloat, and any Marxist should know that it is not great, but a gross, degenerate country that will

require a miracle almost to save it from the dreadful holocaust that the crooks in Westminster are inviting. The 'GB' should be erased from the Communist Party card, just as the title *The Daily Worker* should be restored to our newspaper.

Best wishes.

Alan Laurie  
Glasgow

### Brian Gregory replies:

On several occasions Amin has been vilified in the manner comrade Laurie quotes, but we are still waiting for the vaunted evidence of his perfidy. Surely if such evidence existed it would have been published long ago. The fact remains that until this evidence is produced we see no reason to abandon our description of Amin as "the true leader of the April Revolution" (*The Leninist* No 2 Spring 1982) and his killing and that of 97 other PDPA leaders as a crime deforming Afghanistan's development.

We have said that prime responsibility for the crisis in Poland lies with the PUWP. Unfortunately we have to question strongly the course comrade Jaruzelski has followed; there is little sign of a genuine break from past undemocratic and bureaucratic methods to date.

Comrade Laurie's point about separate CPs for England, Scotland and Wales is important. In brief, we hold that it would be incorrect to divide the working class in Britain, for to do so would weaken its ability to fight the British state. And after all, since it cannot be shown that imperialism would be seriously weakened by such a move, then we argue that a Leninist Communist Party in Britain is what communists must fight for.

### Small Alliance

To: *Red Action*, *Workers' Power*, *Socialist Group*, *Socialist Federation*, *The Leninist*, *Revolutionary Communist Group*, *Big Flame*.

The Tory-employer offensive has produced a deep crisis within the British working class movement. In these circumstances we have a responsibility to do all we can to encourage and develop a united fightback.

As part of this process, we believe that an alliance or united front of the smaller groupings on the left would assist the general fightback against the employers and their allies.

The aim of this alliance would be to encourage and promote joint activity as well as clarifying and debating our differences. Each group would of course be completely free to develop and operate its own perspectives, but where possible joint activity would strengthen the general economic and political struggle.

If there is general support for this proposal in your group, we would like to propose that occasional meetings take

### The Sword of Damocles

Long, long before the Soviets arose,  
Spain, France and Britain had made Imperial foes;  
For centuries they plunged us into War,  
While they from afar, have reaped the gain of Greed,  
Creating havoc and universal need  
In every land,  
Plundered, ravaged each corner of the globe  
And donned the lying robe of innocence;  
They came to 'civilise the horde'?  
They came to murder millions with the sword,  
"To quell the natives", used any wicked libel  
To loot their hands and leave them with the Bible.

Long, long before the Soviet name was heard,  
The Indian and Negro slave both shared  
The Whip and Chain, tormented lives to live,  
Or flee their homes, poor trembling fugitives.  
The Tyrant has not changed  
But merely re-arranged his arsenal!

Instead of Whip & Chain & Hanging-rope,  
He's found new source of hope in Atom-bombs;  
Yet still he fears his end,  
For no true man of conscience is his friend.  
Groping with rage, uncertain, blind,  
His last great card —  
The blackmail of Mankind.

Roy Henderson  
Glasgow



place between representatives of our groups as soon as reasonably possibly.

In comradeship  
Revolutionary Democratic Group  
Edinburgh

Jack Conrad replies:

The aim to strengthen the fightback by the working class is a laudable one. But can this in any way be achieved through an alliance of the forces around *The Leninist* and the "smaller groupings on the left" outlined above? We think not. Those groups of which we have more than a vague idea of their existence (many of them do not even have a regular publication) have important tactical and strategic differences with *The Leninist*. For example, *Red Action* and the Revolutionary Democratic Group consider the Soviet Union to be state capitalist and therefore, monstrously, they refuse to defend it against imperialism's anti-Soviet war drive. During the miners' Great Strike the RCG opposed the fight for a general strike, the only way to achieve a victory; the Socialist Group campaigned for a "recall TUC" despite the obvious fact that the TUC and the labour bureaucracy had openly sold out the miners and that what was needed was a general strike with or without the TUC, not useless diversions like another TUC talking shop.

These points are not unimportant, but perhaps of more striking importance is the fact that our uniting with such a motley and impotent crew will not advance the cause of the working class one iota; indeed, the search for a "united front" with such forces would be a deviation from the main task of taking the ideology of Marxism-Leninism into the working class struggle, fusing the class struggle and the struggle for a vanguard Leninist Communist Party, and breaking the grip of reformism over the working class. Because this is the aim of those around *The Leninist* — an aim unique to our tendency — we must question the worth of an alliance of forces whose only common characteristic seems to be lack of numbers and of links with the working class.

## FUND

Last month readers and supporters raised the magnificent sum of £756. This goes a long way to paying off our debt. But the effort must be maintained, indeed we are determined to increase the number of pages in the paper from 12 to 16 in May. To ensure that this can be achieved keep the donations coming. Send them to us at BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

Dave Kitson: communist, liberation fighter and internationalist, talks to *The Leninist*

# From the muzzle of an AK 47

*The Leninist*: What lessons did you draw from your experiences in fighting the apartheid South African state?

Dave Kitson: Well, of course we were up against the sharp end of the South African state and when that happens for such a period they tend to discard all the 'frills', and all the so-called 'freedoms'. You then tend to accept the reality of the world situation more stoically, shall we say. So that, for instance, if one sees the world in terms of a conflict between socialism and imperialism then one doesn't have much trouble in supporting the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan because we see it in terms of bi-polarity. Also, for a lot of the time we were held in jail we were held incommunicado, so it was difficult to get an accurate and up-to-date picture of what was going on in the rest of the world. But nevertheless there was a trickle of people into the jail all the time and they were usually Marxists or communists and mostly the latter, whom could describe what was going on and bring us up-to-date.

And so we heard about the rise of Eurocommunism and that sort of reaction to the lead of the Soviet Union in world affairs; not that I'm advocating that the Soviet Union should lead. And it used to worry us, since one heard that the French party had abandoned the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat when in South Africa we were up against the dictatorship of a bourgeoisie in no uncertain terms.

*The Leninist*: Could you tell us something about the South African Communist Party and its relationship to the ANC?

Dave Kitson: It was founded after the First World War when there was an upsurge in the formation of Communist Parties. There were people like Bill Andrews, who became the chairman of the party eventually, who had come from England when the gold mines started and they brought working class ideas with them. Tom Mann also used to visit South Africa. So the South African Communist Party was formed.

In 1912 the African National Congress was formed, under a different name, but it soon adopted the name it goes under at the moment. It tended to seek democratic rights for black people by non-violent means; and it existed for nearly fifty years until it was banned in 1960 after the Sharpeville shootings.

After the Soweto uprisings the African National Congress and all the other organisations opposed to apartheid were banned, the organisations that were still legal that is. Discussions were held and Umkhonto we Sizwe was set up; it means 'Spear of the Nation', and it was a paramilitary organisation because the outcome of these discussions, in which the Communist Party participated, was that one couldn't hope for peaceful changes to take place in South Africa not even for bourgeois democracy for all. One would have to seek a change by means of armed conflict, which of course would start off as sabotage. So the Communist Party participated in that.

I was asked to join Umkhonto we Sizwe because I'm a mechanical engineer and I was even in the sappers during the war, so I had certain skills they wanted. With the passage of time I became a member of the National High Command of Umkhonto after the Rivonia raids had arrested the original National High Command and I represented the Communist Party on that body. There was a liaison between me and the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party.



*The Leninist*: Turning to the South African Communist Party's fraternal party in this country, the Communist Party of Great Britain, what is your view of the CPGB's current attitude to solidarity work?

Dave Kitson: Well, I'm not really versed in that. Of course, I have had a discussion with McLennan and they expressed their solidarity through support of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which we support of course. However, they tend to do it through the more 'respectable', accepted organisations, whereas in this country now there are a lot of people outside these organisations. In particular in this country there has been a growth of racism as was evidenced by the events in Brixton, Toxteth, St Pauls, and the like. Most of the young black people involved in that were outside the general protest organisations or working class organisations and I feel there is a link between apartheid in South Africa and racism here.

*The Leninist*: What for you are the links between the struggle in South Africa and the miners' strike?

Dave Kitson: Over the past months I've been travelling around Britain and speaking at public meetings against apartheid under the joint auspices of the African National Congress and AUEW/TASS and wherever I've been I've come across miners, so I'm conscious of the fact that there is a struggle going on here and that miners are resisting an attack by the British ruling class on the people.

When it comes to links with South Africa, well, this country imports South African coal, of course, as a way of getting around the difficulties of mining coal in this country while the strike was on. That's on the ruling class's side.

But on the other hand, the South African black miners have given support to the struggle here. A little while ago in the gold mining industry, the National Union of Mineworkers, which is a black organisation, went on strike for improved wages and conditions and met, of course, a police backlash in which seven miners were killed. But they more or less won the strike. Since then, British miners have visited South Africa and black miners have actually made a financial contribution to the miners' struggle here.

*The Leninist*: Have you had a chance yet to look at the current crisis in the Communist Party?

Dave Kitson: Well, you know, it has impinged on me in various ways but I haven't really been involved in it because I've sort of been the victim of

the situation since my arrival. I arrived to intense media interest: in the first few weeks I did nothing but give interviews to newspapers, radio, TV, or whatever. Then I went on a speaking tour because I'm a member of TASS, and throughout my imprisonment the trade union movement has been supportive of me, and TASS in particular set up a 'Kitson Committee' to secure the release of South African political prisoners and to rouse the interest of TASS members against apartheid. A lot of people grew up in the trade union movement with my imprisonment in the background, they all wanted to meet me, so I had to go round everywhere. That task I enjoyed. I went around the country speaking to these people and it was a whistle-stop tour in a way; I didn't have time to have any social life or to read or to get deeply involved in what should be done about the disarray that faces the British Communist Party. I have occasionally had talks with various people on different sides of the controversy but I haven't got involved myself.

*The Leninist*: There is undoubtedly a crisis in our world movement; do you have any thoughts on this?

Dave Kitson: Well look, I'm involved in the liberation struggle in South Africa. We see it as a liberation struggle, not as a working class struggle alone, that is the Trotskyist attitude and I don't feel I can prescribe for what goes on in the rest of the world based on my own experiences in South Africa. Each country has to seek its own salvation. The particular tactics are determined by the particular historical background of the country you happen to be in.

But I do feel that the principles which Lenin elaborated should be adhered to and deviations from it, those represented by Eurocommunism — though there are people who don't like that label, well, whatever the watering-down might be called, it's reminiscent of the behaviour of the Second International, isn't it, and in the end they sold out down the line — these deviations must be fought.

*The Leninist*: The miners' strike in Britain has provided us with both positive and negative examples of the role of the socialist countries in providing solidarity to other workers' struggles. Could you outline the supportive role that the socialist countries, in particular the Soviet Union, plays with the people of South Africa?

Dave Kitson: As far as the struggle in South Africa is concerned in the speeches I have been making I have been saying: whilst one hopes that the struggle will be resolved in South Africa through a whole complex of actions, ranging from the actions of the United Democratic Front to the military actions of the African National Congress, nevertheless the policy of armed conflict of the African National Congress is the bottom line. Otherwise the Nats would be happy to talk for ever to people who would seek a negotiable solution. That's not really on. But the actions solution has to be found and if they don't find a solution we are going to overthrow them eventually no matter how long it takes.

And in that, we have had support from the socialist countries of the world, in particular in Europe and the Soviet Union. I don't know where we would be if we didn't have that support. So I've been summing this up by saying that freedom in South Africa will come from the muzzle of an AK 47, and I say AK 47 to show that the Soviets are supporting us. We welcome and applaud their support.



THE YCL

# Euro Wreckers

Chris Kincaid

IN THE 16 years between 1967 and 1983 there has been a 90% drop in its membership; during the miners' Great Strike membership further declined from 627 to 546. The majority of these 546 members only exist as paper members, very few branches are functioning, and it is doubtful whether there are more than 70 activists.

What organisation is this? It is the mocking remnant of a youth organisation Communist Party members used to point to with pride as their Young Communist League.

The sad state of affairs outlined above is a testimony of what Eurocommunist leadership in the YCL has led to. A consistent excuse the Euros use for the decline is the existence of an opposition which 'does not unite around Congress policy'. In reality however blame for the decline lies squarely with the Euros themselves who, of course, are not averse to ignoring Congress policies they happen not to like (certainly the case with the 1983 Congress policies on the women's question and the YCL's paper *Challenge*).

However it is the YCL's role in the miners' Great Strike that has fully exposed these wreckers for what they are. But before we examine the Great Strike it would be illuminating to take a brief look back to 1926 when the YCL was a similar size and, most importantly, of a fundamentally different political character.

The YCL was extremely active in the solidarity campaigns with the miners both before and after the 1926 General Strike. This activity was despite the fact that its Secretary William Rust and Acting Secretary were both imprisoned by a fearful bourgeois state. Young communists were prominent in the most demanding fields of struggle — they took the lead in picketing, Workers' Defence Corps, communications, and the semi-legal work of duplicating and distributing the local bulletins of the CPGB and the Councils of Action.

Centrally the YCL produced a daily bulletin *The Young Striker* and a number of districts produced extended versions of this with local supplements. Large numbers of militant recruits were won. Because of the sterling work for the miners in the last few months of 1925, the wholehearted mass campaigning during the nine days of the General Strike, and the undeviating support in the bitter seven months of the lockout it could be reported to the Fourth Congress held in December 1926 that the YCL had trebled its membership and that 75% of the recruits were young miners.

The YCL's record in the 1984-5 Great Strike is dismal in comparison. The Euro domination of the leadership ensured that little beyond charity mongering came from centre. For the first nine months even attempts to get the YCL's General Council (equivalent to the Party's Executive Committee) to include an item on the miners' strike were blocked. Certainly the call for *Challenge* to be made a monthly were rejected out of hand on the fallacious grounds of economics — the YCL has four full timers. But even with these four full timers it proved impossible for the YCL leadership to produce their paper even on its leisurely two monthly basis.

But at last December 1984's GC meeting there appeared an item on its agenda dealing with the miners' strike. As a result of the Euro majority the only decisions that came to light were (1) To produce a *Challenge* broadsheet showing what the YCL had done (sic)



The funeral of Davy Jones goes unmarked by the YCL Euros. Their indignation is only roused a few months later by the death of a scab.

during the strike — this was needed the Euros felt because YCLers might get a hostile response from miners demanding to know what the YCL had done for the miners' cause: the four A4 sheets with their reprint of the NUM's case for coal and numerous pictures indeed sums it up. (2) Showing their true feelings about the strike it was decided — not without opposition — to send the GC's condolences to the widow of scab Wilkie who had just met a three foot concrete post and his just deserts.

In truth the Euros have done an excellent job for the bourgeoisie in wrecking the once proud youth organisation of the CPGB. The Euros were certainly correct that if they dared approach militant young miners it would be doubtful if they would have

ever heard of the YCL. Even Arthur Scargill, once on the YCL leadership, upon coming across a lone *Challenge* seller declared "Oh the YCL — is it still going?" Such has been the impact on the YCL during the most important strike in British history.

The truth has been revealed by the miners' Great Strike — the Euro leaders of the YCL fear and hate the working class. This is fully shown by their insulting attitude to the Women Against Pit Closures movement; their resolution for the YCL's 1985 Congress contemptuously declares that these women took their inspiration and lead from the clowns at Greenham Common. In truth it is the YCL that takes its inspiration and lead from Greenham not the Women Against Pit Closures movement.

## Resolutions

THE DRAFT resolutions from the Young Communist League General Council on "The YCL — Facing the '80s" and "Young People and the Fightback" are well worth reading if you can get hold of a copy of the Congress document.

The pretence that the YCL really has anything to do with the working class movement has been all but dropped. The "Fightback" against "Thatcherism" for the YCL has certainly not been spearheaded by the militant young miners — they are relegated in importance far behind the whoopin' and halloin' Greenham women (remember them...?) and that evergreen favourite of the YCL leadership, Youth CND.

The miners and their epoch-making battle are reduced to the level of just another factor that has helped to 'radicalise' people in 1984. The most "significant" event since the last YCL Congress two years ago is apparently the arrival of Cruise and Pershing II in Europe. In fact the entire document struggles hard to whip up some enthusiasm about *something* but doesn't quite manage it. For after all, there has been a "downturn" in young people's political organisation during this period (has the YCL been infiltrated by the SWP?) with the partial exception of (wait for it), yes, "Youth CND".

Both resolutions reek of the bureaucratic dishonesty, authoritarianism, and lack of talent of the present leadership of the League. There is again no self-criticism or explanation of the fact that even given the

biggest class battle in Britain at least since 1926, YCL membership has continued its precipitous decline and the number of active branches carries on drying up. Instead, we are treated to the same old tired rhetoric and 'jolly wheezes' such as "festivals and concerts" to bring us in fistfuls of new members. As is always the case with the YCL, stuntism replaces political relevance.

Both resolutions are liberally sprinkled with dollops of comrade Doug 'Chalmers of the Yard's' brand of rigid police centralism. Several times, the need for a "united leadership" committed to "YCL policies" (apart presumably from the ones it doesn't like) is emphasised. For "united" remember to read "exclusively Eurocommunist". Bearing this in mind it really is quite screamingly funny that comrade Chalmers and his motley crew target "anti-authoritarian youth" as one of the main audiences for the politics of the YCL. The YCL under the dictatorship of Generalissimo Chalmers has been about as "anti-authoritarian" and flexible as the Praetorian guard.

We recommend to comrades in the YCL that other than voting against both these resolutions they ignore them and concentrate on getting their own branch resolutions in. This dress really is unamendable.

For our part, we shall look to the inspiring example of the young miners, not Youth CND, to give us vision of the future of the YCL when we run it.

The role of the YCL in the miners' Great Strike is also worth comparing with that of *The Leninist*. The fact is that we have far less in the way of resources and contacts than the YCL. Despite this we have produced a 12 page paper every month where the YCL Euros could not even manage to stir themselves to bring out a two monthly 8 page *Challenge*.

The basis for this difference is firmly rooted in politics: we look to Marxism-Leninism and the working class — they look to liberalism and the petty bourgeois milieu. We do not draw this comparison to present ourselves as beyond criticism but to demonstrate what Marxist-Leninist politics can produce even with the slenderest resources compared with the £6,500 per annum full timers of the YCL. *The Leninist* put its full resources into supporting the miners' struggle and attempted to give it a clear revolutionary perspective. As a result we have had an impact far out of proportion to our size. We have, however, only done what should be expected of any communist organisation.

If the YCL were a genuine communist organisation it would have performed miracles in order to support the miners, not looked for excuses for doing nothing. For us being a member of a genuine communist youth league means in the words of Lenin: "devoting one's labour and efforts to the common cause... Only in the course of such work do young men and women become real communists" (*Tasks of the Youth League* p.19).

The YCL Euro leadership is not only liberal it is also lazy; the only thing they devote their labour and efforts to is plotting to do down the anti-Euro opposition in the YCL. It is so corrupt as to have been outraged by the suggestion that they hand over their full timers' wages during the miners' strike so that their organisation could produce propaganda material. They argued against this by claiming that without full timers on full time wages nothing would or could be produced! — Such is the bureaucratic degeneration of the YCL!

This contempt for communist self sacrifice goes hand in hand with contempt for communist principles. For the YCL General Secretary who was not prepared to forgo his full time wages was also the one who called the police on 15 young communists in Hackney (6 of whom were black) and thus justly earned the handle 'Chalmers of the Yard'. The General Secretary's behaviour during the miners' strike thus comes as no surprise to those of us familiar with the outrageous Hackney events.

The Euros are as terrified of young militant miners as they are of young revolutionaries and young working class blacks. And rightly so. They know that an influx of genuine communists into the YCL would turn it on its head and with it their comfortable easy life.

The YCL Congress in April provides the anti-Euro opposition in the League with a golden opportunity to expose the rotten Euro leadership. We must do so as partisans of the working class, defenders of the socialist countries, heirs of the 1926 YCL. If the opposition takes up the weapons of Leninism it can become the focal point of attraction of thousands of militant working class youth especially the heroic young miners who are yearning to get revenge on Thatcher and her rotten system.

Unless we do the discussion about the YCL might become academic — for unless the Euros are cleared out they will wreck it for sure.



# The crisis in the CPGB

## Which way for communists?

Jack Conrad

THE SPECIAL CONGRESS of the Communist Party of Great Britain over May 18-20 is undoubtedly of historic importance simply because it exposes the depth of the crisis gripping our Party. But whatever its outcome the congress of itself cannot positively resolve the crisis of the CPGB. Neither a Euro/McLennanite gerrymandered congress majority nor a pro-Morning Star fluke victory can equip the working class with the sort of party the conditions of capitalist crisis are demanding. So whoever wins at the 39th Congress we communists will still be confronted with fundamental questions which, like it or not, we must now answer and act upon.

Essentially we have in front of us two paths. One path is wide and easy to walk. It is paved with good intentions of becoming a neo-Fabian "unink tank of the left", pro-Soviet entryism into the Labour Party, or place seeking in the trade union hierarchy. This is the path of liquidationism and reformism.

The second path welcomes the intensification of the class struggle epitomised by the miners' Great Strike; this path is steep and narrow, but at its end is a reformed Communist Party and the fight for working class state power.

Genuine communists will naturally, hand on heart, declare that they look to building a vanguard Communist Party. But how to build it, around what principles to fight, how long to stay organisationally united with the Eurocommunists, how to avoid the tragic sectarian fate of the New Communist Party?

These questions cannot be answered by gut reaction, no matter how superficially healthy. Instead we must coolly take up the weapons of Marxist-Leninist scientific analysis and apply them to our struggle. It is by using these weapons that we can answer the pressing questions of the moment and face the future with confidence.

Our study will examine the various groupings and tendencies that have emerged in the CPGB, something which has become a relatively easy task because of the welcome openness of the inner-Party struggle. But above all we will outline our strategy of building a vanguard Communist Party and answer the question: which way for communists?

### 1. The decline of the CPGB and its political effects

The crisis in the CPGB today is more profound than anything it has experienced in the past. It dwarfs the dissensions produced by the Hungarian events of 1956, the Maoist splinters during the 1960s, or the formation of the New Communist Party in 1977. The reasons for this are complicated, and in order to understand them we must follow the CPGB in its development, set it in its historic context, and examine all its facets and connections and how this relates to the class struggle in Britain and the world as a whole.

While we cannot achieve complete comprehensiveness, certainly not within the limitations of these four pages, such an approach does guard

against 16 St John Street mythology as well as adventurist shortsightedness. For the sake of clarity we will begin by examining the Party crisis through the prism of the Party's organisational decline, briefly touching upon its performance during the miners' Great Strike.

In terms of bald figures, the decline of the CPGB has been staggering. If we look at membership figures over the last two decades we can see that there has been a drop in membership of over 50%. In 1965 there were 33,539 card carrying members; by 1984 this was down to a mere 15,113; and at the time of writing (March 1985) card exchange figures presented to the Executive Committee were 2,000 below the figure for the same time last year. And far from the intensification of the class struggle slowing the rate of decline, the opposite is the case: the rate of decline in recent years has sharply accelerated.

Membership is of course important but quality is central. For example in 1925 the CPGB had just over 5,000 members but through the National Minority Movement it influenced, even led, hundreds of thousands of workers, and this was from an explicitly revolutionary position of smashing the capitalist system through social revolution. And during the General Strike the Party doubled its membership, the overwhelming majority of recruits coming from the coalfields, a tribute to its outstanding well organised, and unceasing struggle in support of the miners' heroic determination to resist the wage cutting coal barons.

We do not have a misty eyed view of our Party during the 1920s; we know that for much of this period its membership was extremely unstable. Thus, by the end of 1927 30% of the membership gained in 1926 had already been lost, moreover by November 1930 membership had nosedived to 2,555 and the Party had become isolated from the core of the working class: around 50% of the Party was accounted for by housewives and unemployed workers. And even in 1932, when membership had increased to 9,000 because of the effects of the economic crisis gripping Britain, it was said that around two thirds of these were 'paper' members. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt about the discipline and dedication demanded of members, and if members did not come up to scratch they and the Party parted ways: a fact indicated not only by the rapid fluctuations of membership but the militant and vivid memories of our movement's veterans.

How that past, impressive despite its undoubted faults, stands in towering contrast to the lamentable position which applies today. Now a Party member — once a title carried with pride — is asked to pay dues, requested to attend meetings, encouraged to sell the *Morning Star*, all clear signs of a social democratic approach to membership. The most shocking proof of this is surely dues payments. While one might expect that with Party membership falling the most dedicated would stay and thus dues payments at least in percentage terms would rise this is not the case. Over the last decade or so dues payments have stood at only

the level sufficient to cover 50% of membership and in Scotland, the largest district, this figure is an almost unbelievable 27%.

These figures tell us everything about the quality of today's membership and this inevitably affects the Party's impact on the class as a whole, which although not an easily judged thing can be indicated by two key statistics: circulation of the Party press and its votes at election times.

The most important vehicle of CPGB propaganda has been the *Morning Star*. Its rise and fall is well known but must be presented not least because it is even more dramatic than the Party itself. In 1939 about 100,000 copies of the *Daily Worker* (the name of the *Morning Star* until 1966) were being sold: that was twice as many as the *Manchester Guardian* and about half the circulation of *The Times*. And this was during a period when newsagents refused to handle it and Party members had to get up at the crack of dawn to collect it from railway depots and distribute it themselves.

During World War II (after the government ban on it was lifted) its circulation rose, and even at the beginning of the Cold War in 1951 it sold 115,000. It was only during the height of the Cold War that the decline really set in; thus by 1960 sales were down to 73,000 — a heady figure when we look at today's circulation which stands at around 29,000 with over half of this going abroad, mainly to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Indeed such has been the decline that as we all know the paper's Management Committee says that there is a great danger that the *Morning Star* will in a couple of years join *Comment*, *Labour Monthly*, and *World News* in the CPGB publications graveyard.

It is true that since October 1977 when comrade Martin Jacques took over as editor of *Marxism Today* there has been a certain increase in sales until today, when it is claimed that these stand at around 12,000. But we should remember that this is a tiny figure when compared with Party backed publications like *Labour Monthly* in the 1920s and 1930s and that the political content of *Marxism Today*, while it is peddled as the "theoretical and discussion journal of the CPGB," is almost entirely Eurocommunist, which is why WH Smith eagerly handles it having found it the acceptable face of communism.

When it comes to the Party's electoral performance the situation is dire. And remember that votes are an important indicator for a revolutionary party, let alone for a parliamentary roadist party like our today's CPGB. In 1922 the Party stood seven candidates in the general election and won 52,819 votes. The following year it stood nine candidates and got 76,741 votes; and in 1924 standing for the first time universally on a straight CP ticket eight candidates secured 55,355 votes. The highest vote was gained in 1945 in the warmth of the World War II British/Soviet alliance when, fielding 21 candidates, 102,760 votes were won.

The Cold War had an important effect. In the 1950 general election 100 candidates only managed to get 91,684 votes. And from there on in, like the

*Daily Worker*, the decline was more or less continuous. Thus compared with the 1924 general election when the revolutionary CPGB secured an average of 6,918 votes per candidate and 25% of the poll, where they stood in 1983 the thoroughly parliamentary roadist CPGB got 11,598 votes for a total of 35 candidates: that is an average of 331 votes per candidate or a paltry 0.8% of the total vote in the constituencies contested.

And the full extent of the degeneration of the CPGB itself was graphically illustrated by the miners' strike — the most important industrial struggle in Britain this century — and thus an acid test. In 1926, a similar acid test, the CPGB was so feared by the government that its leadership was incarcerated for the whole period around the General Strike. During the nine days of the General Strike CP members played an outstanding role, taking a lead in establishing Councils of Action and Workers' Defence Corps, and developing aspects of dual power. The Party frenetically churned out propaganda giving the working class day to day leadership, branches produced highly effective local bulletins, and even the YCL issued a daily newsheet for young workers, especially young miners. As a result not less than 1,200 Party members (around a quarter of the pre-strike membership) suffered arrest. What is more, the Party press was banned and police raids became a normal part of life, along with seizure of duplicating equipment, interception of mail, and confiscation of anything that might cause "disaffection". And throughout the subsequent seven month lockout it was the communists who stood by the miners fighting for aid to them, not just in the form of money but also industrial solidarity.

Of course in the 1984/5 Great Strike many individual Party members did sterling work in collecting food and money, but the Party leadership provided nothing remotely like communist leadership. Instead of this they saw their role as being little more than cheerleaders for the NUM National Executive Committee. This meant projecting the strike as an object of petty bourgeois charity-mongering on the one hand and a patriotic crusade to save "Britain's industrial future" on the other. So, far from fighting for a militant united working class front in the form of a general strike, the Party leadership sought to "broaden" support for the strike by winning churchmen, SDPers, and assorted liberal riff raff, something which demanded that it attack the miners' justified violence, their mass picketing, and the failure to fully present "the image of miners fighting in the interests of the nation, and of defending one of Britain's most important national assets." (Pete Carter *Marxism Today* March 1985 p.31)

The same petty bourgeois mentality meant that confronted with a working class women's movement in the shape of the Women Against Pit Closures movement the Eurocommunists desperately attempted to foist on them the clowning feminist pacifist tactics of Greenham Common. And when these working class women rejected



this advice and insisted on standing with *their* men, actively supporting their violence, and refusing to acknowledge any debt whatsoever to feminism, the Euros firmly shut their eyes and insisted on the leading and inspirational role of the Greenham women despite all the facts. A more fitting illustration of the contempt the Euros have for the working class could not be found.

And far from wanting to politicise the strike the Euros fought tooth and nail to ensure that the Party stood Canute-like against the surging tide of politicisation. The above quoted Euro comrade, Pete Carter, the 'trendy' Industrial Organiser insisted that "Any projection of the strike as a political strike aimed at bringing down the government will be of no help to the miners — quite the reverse" (Executive Committee meeting May 1984).

So while the Tories actively pursued their political struggle against the miners, while the miners, backs against the wall, formed hit squads and organised mass picketing, while this strategic test of strength was played out over twelve gruelling months, the Euro/McLennan leadership insisted that the strike was not political and that the key to success lay in painting it in a patriotic red, white, and blue, and winning the sympathy of the church. As a result, although the Party gained some valuable recruits from the coalfields this was almost entirely due to local initiatives and the revolutionary image of the CPGB still held by many in the working class. Certainly the strike owed none of its militancy to 16 St John Street, which as we have stated provided nothing in the way of communist leadership nor anything approaching it. Indeed its pressing concern throughout the duration of the miners' Great Strike was hanging onto its positions and its stranglehold over the Communist Party itself.

In order to understand how this tragic state of affairs came about it is no good simply going back to, say, 1956 or 1979. The Marxist method demands that we begin at the beginning with the factors that went to create the CPGB in the first place. By understanding them and tracing its development we can discover the origin of today's crisis and thus some indication of how it is to be positively resolved. We will do this under the two interweaved categories of the international and the ideological, from which we will be able to tackle the current crisis.

## 2. International and ideological factors behind the CPGB crisis

Britain was the first country to develop industrial capitalism and with it a mass, militant working class movement in the form of Chartism. Despite this the fact was that by the end of the nineteenth century, because of the smoothing out of class antagonisms through the impact of imperialism and the creation of a labour aristocracy, the working class movement became permeated with liberalism, which with the turn of the century evolved into Labourism. Revolutionaries who not so long ago could command enthusiastic mass support found themselves reduced to a troglodyte existence of small sects for which socialist theory had become a dry dogma not a living guide to action.

Because of the relative decline of British imperialism, in Britain, with the rise of Germany and the United States, the capitalist class was forced to up the rate of exploitation: as a result the four years before the outbreak of World War I saw an upsurge in the class struggle and a certain weakening of the grip of the labour bureaucracy over the working class. Yet despite this, while the revolutionary groups attracted many fine militants they remained tiny in size, amateurish in organisation, and in essence centrist in ideology. It was general events in the international workers' movement that provided the stimulus for change.

World War I shattered the Second International. The opportunists who dominated most parties reneged on their pledges of undying internationalism and joined the camp of their 'own' ruling classes. Reflecting the sectional and short term interests of the labour aristocracy these leaders of the working class called upon the working class of one country to kill the working class of another country for the sake of imperialist plunder.

Because World War I had such a cataclysmic effect on the workers' movement, because it coincided with the emergence of a world capitalist general crisis, and because the war posed point blank the question of revolution, it was vital for the revolutionary internationalist forces to not only break from the reformist traitors and their centrist apologists but to organise themselves for revolution.

It was the lessons learnt in Russia that were to provide the classic model. At this time Russia was economically the most backward of European countries. But as well as Asiatic barbarity, the remnants of feudalism, and the dullness of rural life, there existed islands of industry which were amongst the most advanced in the world — they were to provide the powerhouse for a proletarian movement that was to change the world.

From the 1890s or thereabouts, and certainly from 1905, the world's revolutionary centre shifted from Germany to Russia. The social and class contradictions were so acute that every strata was drawn into the revolutionary vortex. What is more, this and the ever changing conditions, the experience of illegality and legality, underground workers' education circles and mass movement, and reaction and revolution, acted like a hothouse which allowed, even forced, the workers' movement in Russia to make a qualitative leap from the mechanical centrist 'official' Marxism of the Second International.

At the forefront of this leap stood Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. Lenin enriched Marxism through applying it to both the specific advanced revolutionary conditions in Russia and a world which had seen capitalism evolve from its free trade stage to a parasitic and far more warlike imperialist stage of monopoly and imperialism.

Of course the dramatic impact of Leninism was enhanced by the October Revolution but its swift take up by class conscious workers showed that it was no national phenomenon but an international one. Definite proof of this came with the formation of the Third (Communist) International and a host of communist parties — crystallising the schism between the reformist and revolutionary wings of the international workers' movement in an organisational form.

In Britain a number of previously warring centrist groupings, most notably the British Socialist Party (BSP) and the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), came together and sought to join the new international. This step was possible in part because of the renewed upsurge of militancy towards the end of World War I, but also and not least the inspiration of the October Revolution and the direct intervention of the leadership of Comintern including Lenin himself.

It is certainly clear from the statements of the Joint Committee for a Communist Party (established by the BSP, the SLP, etc.) that international factors were crucial. In the Joint Committee's *Call for a Communist Party* the idea of emulating the Bolsheviks was the cardinal question; they wanted to fully absorb the Bolsheviks' theory, organisation, and practice. As a result the *Call* declared itself for soviets, damning the institution of parliament as a sham; it ridiculed the notion of a peaceful road to socialism, and bluntly stated that a "Communist Party must stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat." Above all the *Call* demanded the

shedding of the looseness and centrism of the old socialist groups and the formation of a Bolshevik type party, "a party of action. One that will wage the class war up to the point of revolution, rejecting with disdain all compromise and truck with capitalist reform, but ever seeking to organise and rally the working class to the standard of International Communism."

Such pronouncements show how key were international developments in the formation of the CPGB. It was clearly the product of an international split and the planting of the seed of advanced Bolshevism into the thin soil of a labour movement in Britain still dominated by the labour aristocracy and bureaucracy. It is essential to grasp the fact that the early outstanding role of the CPGB, not least its highly successful implementation of united front tactics with the setting up of the National Minority Movement, was due to the willingness of advanced workers to take up the theoretical and organisational weapons forged in Russia.

This does not mean that the CPGB was an "artificial creation" as little Englander left reformists like Eric Hoffer are wont to claim, but that it was the product of international developments showing that world revolution was increasingly a unified process. Not to have formed the CPGB, not to have taken on board the most advanced lessons, would have been akin to expecting each nation having to reinvent, say, the car, the telephone, or the aeroplane. Such a suggestion is so ridiculous that only reformists would consider it worth pursuing. The Bolshevik type party may have been 'invented' in Russia but once 'invented' it was available to all who wanted and indeed dared to fight for socialist revolution.

But while the CPGB was the highest achievement of the working class movement in Britain — an achievement that has not been surpassed to date — the fact that it was not formed as a result of arduous and protracted ideological struggle, the power of British imperialism and its ability to attenuate class antagonisms through bribery, and certainly the collapse of post World War I militancy in the wake of the 1926 debacle meant that the Party was heavily dependent for guidance on Comintern in general and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in particular. Although this produced very impressive results while the Soviet Union was under the leadership of Lenin, with the victory of Stalin the early achievements were slowly eroded.

Given the isolation of socialism in one country a sort of atavism developed in the USSR. This encouraged the growth of centrism in the CPSU and a turning away from the tasks of the world revolution. This had important consequences for the CPGB as well as the world communist movement as a whole.

The Marxist outlook considers the idea of motion and change as fundamental. It recognises therefore that while form can remain outwardly similar content can radically alter.

So when we look at the CPGB of 1920 with its revolutionary theory and practice and compare it with the crisis ridden CPGB of 1985 with its reformist programme it is crystal clear that although there has been a historical continuity in terms of outward appearance, even in terms of some members, there has been a fundamental break with our revolutionary past. Our programme and leadership are opposed to the Leninist founding principles of our Party and democratic centralism has long ago been prostituted into its opposite bureaucratic centralism.

To understand how this happened we must again look at developments in the world as a whole.

We have already mentioned that with the rise of Stalin the CPSU took steps away from Leninism towards centrism, albeit of a new sort. This meant that in Britain, where external

influences had been crucial, the CPGB lost its anchorage in Leninism. As the CPSU downgraded its proletarian internationalism the CPGB, which was in many ways left centrist, was increasingly opened up to the magnetic pull of reformism and with it the watering down of principles, the courting of bourgeois respectability, and the thirst for acceptability.

That path to the right was greatly eased by the attitude of Stalin who came to see Comintern and its constituent parties as an arm of the USSR's Foreign Ministry. Because of this Stalin demanded that communists throughout the world follow the diplomatic twists and turns of the Soviet state.

Thus, with proletarian internationalism robbed of its vital critical content and turned into diplomatic internationalism CPGB General Secretary Harry Pollitt could say in his speech to the 1935 London District Congress that the Party supports "100 per cent, and without any reservations everything the Soviet Union does in its foreign policy."

Because the Soviet Union was the only socialist state, because of the desire to defend this precious gain, because of the overwhelming power and prestige of the CPSU compared with other parties, many communists considered it their sacred duty to agree with every pronouncement emanating from the Kremlin no matter how much it flew in the face of accepted Marxist-Leninist truths. Thus, in the latter half of the 1920s Comintern and its parties adopted the zigzagging centrist orthodoxy proclaimed by Stalin. This went hand in hand with a bureaucratic approach to political problems and the purging of all dissident voices.

Unfortunately this degeneration met with little resistance in the CPGB, no doubt in part because its formation was not the result of a protracted ideological struggle but mainly and directly related to this the influence of external factors, that is, the political line of Stalin hardly encouraged resistance. Those who did raise objections to the ever changing and contradictory positions either deserted the field of political struggle or retreated to the Labour Party: some through becoming simple Labourites, others by having followed Leon Trotsky into the left sectarian wilderness sought relevance through entering social democratic parties like the Labour Party.

The watershed in the degeneration of Comintern and our own Party was the seventh and final congress of Comintern held in 1935. We know of course that many comrades consider the Seventh Congress a dawn of a golden age for communism but we think we can prove that the opposite is the case.

In the wake of the decimating defeat of the Communist Party of Germany and the harrowing prospect that the victorious Nazis would launch a war of conquest against the USSR, Comintern acting at the behest of the CPSU and Stalin ditched virtually without self-criticism the centrist leftism of the so-called Third Period. In place of this vehemently promoted orthodoxy an almost diametrically opposite centrist rightism was proclaimed. Out went the branding of all social democrats as social fascists and in came a new doctrine and a fateful step to the right which in time led to Comintern's own liquidation in 1943 and our present sad state.

To win bourgeois democracies to accept the Soviet Union as a safe and reliable ally communists were to ingratiate themselves with 'progressive' bourgeois opinion. This meant that they should drop all militant rhetoric and slogans and actively pursue class collaboration and respectability.

In pursuit of this Popular Front the CPGB dropped its infant programme *For Soviet Britain* only adopted in February 1935. In its place came the call 'For a Labour Government', and in 1938 this in turn was superseded by the



aim of a 'Peace Alliance' which would include "democratic peoples of all political parties" including Liberals and 'patriotic' Tories. United together they would, it was absurdly believed, form a Popular Front, anti-Chamberlain "peace government".

To facilitate this the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was put under wraps because according to a Central Committee resolution of the time it "is not now on the order of the day in the present situation in Britain". Even the Party's internationalism was played down in favour of lauding the interests and virtues of Britain, something symbolised in January 1938 by the decision to remove the slogan "Workers of all Lands Unite" from the masthead of the *Daily Worker*.

But the flight from militancy was far more than symbolic. After 1936 the hugely successful National Unemployed Workers Union was put into limbo — no more hunger marches were organised no more mass demonstration against unemployment — despite the fact that unemployment was suffered by well over a million workers. Communists were not to appear as 'troublemakers'; instead they were encouraged to integrate themselves into the labour bureaucracy and the pacifist movement.

That this was a brand of centrism, moving to the right thought it was, is made plain by the defence of the Soviet Union — the world's revolutionary centre. But the CPSU's connivance and encouragement not only had elements of tragedy but of self inflicted injury. For by planting the seeds of the Popular Front, class collaboration inevitably there were produced the fruits of anti-Sovietism.

By donning the poisoned garb of the patriot in an imperialist country, by committing CPs to what was good for their 'own' imperialist country, Comintern was by definition reduced to its individual parts, the consequential disintegration of ideological unity being only a matter of time. So even though the initial impulse of communist social patriotism may have been to encourage France, Britain, the USA, etc. to ally themselves with the Soviet Union against Germany, the logic of social patriotism demanded that communists were forced to oppose the interests of other imperialist countries because they were not only different but antagonistic to their 'own' imperialist country's interests. With each CP doing this, divisions between various parties were unavoidable, including ultimately with the CPSU itself — not of course because of the Leninist principle of criticism and self criticism but because of loyalty to one's 'own' imperialist country.

Anyway the process of disintegration of what was once the party of world revolution was markedly quickened by World War II and its results. Because of a failure to distinguish between the anti-fascist form and the inter-imperialist content of the war fought by the Soviet Union's capitalist allies, communist social patriotism was given a free rein and Marxist-Leninist theory was mercilessly distorted in order to excuse support for an imperialist war. In 1943 Comintern was dissolved, and although it was claimed that this was a result of the 'maturity' of CPs and the impossibility of coordinating them because of the extremely varied conditions they faced due to the war, it was clear as a pikestaff that Stalin was offering it up as a sacrificial lamb in order to assure his allies that the Soviet Union had 'joined the club'. This cynical step was a vivid illustration of his assessment of Comintern's worth, but more importantly it pointed to Stalin's nationalism and contempt for the idea of proletarian internationalism and world revolution.

Of course this national centredness was by no means unique to Stalin; indeed the very liquidation of Comintern and the spread of socialism in the wake of the victories of the Red Army opened the world communist movement up to nationalistic centrifugal forces to a greater extent

than ever before. In France, Finland, and Italy CPs sat in bourgeois governments committed to restoring bourgeois stability and gladly counselled workers against taking militant actions. Indeed, throughout the West CPs urged a retention of the wartime alliance and sought acceptance in the form of Cabinet seats. Such was the permeation of liberalistic attitudes that in the USA the General Secretary of the CP Earl Browder won unanimous approval for the liquidation of the Party using the argument that US capitalists were on the road to socialism and thus the existence of a revolutionary party was superfluous.

But it was the creation of a number of socialist states that was to prove the most powerful factor in breaking up the once 'monolithic' world communist movement. The fact that most of the leaders of these states came to pursue equally national centred policies as Stalin soon led to cracks opening up as each state looked to its own narrow interests. In 1948 the Yugoslav CP was 'excommunicated' because of Tito's refusal to bow before Stalin's will. This was the thin end of the wedge, for while the expansion of socialism was overwhelmingly progressive, under the leadership of centrists not only have many of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe been plagued with chronic instability but conflict between socialist states has on occasions erupted into open warfare. What is more 'heretical' centres have been formed in Beijing, Tirana, and even Pyongyang as rivals to the Soviet Union, something possible given the power of patronage resulting from holding the purse strings of a state machine.

The branding of Tito as a fascist caused a stir (as had the Finnish — Soviet 'Winter War' of 1939-40 and the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact) but it was the events in Hungary during 1956 that fully revealed the contradiction between Western CPs claims about being loyal to both bourgeois democracy and the Soviet Union. News of Soviet tanks exchanging fire with insurgent Home Defence Forces, youths throwing petrol bombs at the AVH security police, and the violent overthrow of the Nagy government shattered many liberal illusions. It all proved too much for many thousands of Party members won in the days of World War II when the British government outlawed anti-Soviet propaganda and the popular press praised "our brave Russian allies" and their "wise leader" Joseph Stalin.

Between February 1956 and February 1958 Party membership fell from 33,095 to 24,670, illustrating the depth of the contradiction that had come to exist between the CPGB's 'one hundred per cent' support for Soviet foreign policy and the pandering to petty bourgeois elements and their prejudices demanded since the Seventh Congress.

Be that as it may the post-Pollitt CPGB continued the steady drift to the right. It sought to rebuild the Party to its former glory by the Pollitt formulae of emphasising the Party's democratic credentials and loyalty to Britain, and its importance to the labour bureaucracy, as well as the technical achievements of the Soviet Union and the progressive march of history in the 'Third World'.

This petrol and water mixture was unstable in that it sought to reconcile the irreconcilable. The Pollitt/Seventh Congress ideology of loyalty to the USSR and loyalty to one's 'own' imperialist country could only be transitional and indeed by 1968 it was resolved by the Party leadership shifting to loyalty to one's 'own' country and merging with the liberal current.

The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was in many ways similar to that in Hungary twelve years earlier, though admittedly it lacked the blood and gore. But this time, unwilling to risk mass resignations from the Party's

regenerated liberal current, determined to flaunt the CPGB's "independence from Moscow", and eager to show the bourgeoisie that times and the CPGB had changed the Gollan leadership (which had of course been nurtured and groomed by Pollitt) crossed the Rubicon and condemned the action of the Soviet Union and its close Warsaw Pact allies.

The capitalist media was suddenly pleased to quote Party statements and although this provoked few resignations from the pro-Soviet loyalists they came to realise that they and the leadership had diverged, reflecting a new contradiction in the Party between a leadership which now firmly placed loyalty to Britain over loyalty to the Soviet Union and the centrists who insisted that loyalty to the Soviet Union must come first.

### 3. The liquidationist crisis

We have seen that the crisis in the CPGB is organisational, international, and ideological, and goes back many years. Inevitably these factors combine to create a crisis of identity which goes to the point of a liquidationist crisis. After all, if a CP first abandons revolutionary practice, then revolutionary rhetoric, and finally breaks from centrist 'one hundred per cent' loyalty to the USSR, what have you?

A number of CPs in the advanced capitalist countries including our CPGB have attempted to conjure up an all things to all people 'third way' to socialism to give them an identity. Claiming to avoid the 'twin evils' of social democracy and the 'totalitarianism' of living socialism this 'third way' is in truth a shabby cover for the social democratisation of these CPs. This can be clearly seen by the PCI supporting Italy's continued membership of NATO, the French CP voting to finance nuclear weapons aimed at the Soviet Union, and the CP in Japan joining with its 'own' bourgeoisie in its territorial claim on the Soviet Union.

The social democratisation is naturally played out on the terrain of the nation state: national economic, political, and cultural factors, stamping the social democratic degeneration with its imprint. In some countries with mass CPs fateful steps have been taken to transform them along the lines of our Labour Party, in other words into mass bourgeois workers' parties — the PCI being the prime example of this. In other countries it has been more a question of slow decline and the onset of senility, but for the small CPGB social democratisation inevitably poses liquidationism. For while the likes of the PCI can become bourgeois workers' parties, for the CPGB this is impossible because the Labour Party is mass and very well established in the social democratic niche. As a consequence those forces with no firm basis in Marxism-Leninism are drawn to liquidationism and the Labour Party like moths to a flame. And this applies not just to the Euro/McLennan leadership but the centrist and *Morning Star* opposition as well.

The social democratisation of CPs is often not a smooth process but one which produces violent convulsions, splits, and divisions. In Sweden, Japan and Spain, there have been small pro-Soviet centrist breakaways which have to a greater or lesser extent come to nothing. In contrast in Greece and Australia centrists with a similar political physiognomy have successfully split and become the dominant force in their country's communist movement — something which is now a possibility in Spain through the bringing together of five centrist groupings and the formation of the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain. But as well as these varied developments there have been parties which have experienced deep splits while remaining formally united. This has been the case in Finland, Holland, and of course Britain.

The crisis in the CPGB has assumed a particularly acute form because underneath the surface the basic

contradiction between reform and revolution is becoming ever more exacerbated because of the impact of British capitalism's drift into profound economic crisis and the clear signs that this is being fuelled by the emergence of a new general crisis of world capitalism — a crisis that Britain will experience in a particularly devastating fashion.

The growing economic difficulties of British capitalism forces 'our' capitalists to turn in on their own country to a degree not known this century. In order to compete internationally, to counteract the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, to increase the mass of profits, the bosses fight to hike the rate of exploitation. And to facilitate this they attack the working class: not just our pay and conditions but our rights and organisations. These developments first undermine and then wash away the material base for the politics of consensus which dominated the politics of the 1950s and 1960s and created the conditions for social peace which characterised Britain during these decades. Because social peace is now visibly wobbling there comes into existence a crisis of reformism, a crisis which encompasses the CPGB given its social democratisation in terms of organisation, politics, and ideology.

Today a great chasm has opened up between the brutal reality of mass unemployment, racism, bitter strikes, and baton wielding riot police, and the hope of a smooth nonviolent transition to socialism as entertained by reformists of all shades. Certainly the easily predictable relegation of the Labour Party from the alternative party of government back to being a party of crisis means that the *British Road's* carefully delineated Labour Party government-step by Labour Party government-step to socialism stands exposed as a pure opportunist fantasy.

In response to this situation the Euro/McLennan leadership has retreated by downgrading the struggle for socialism on its 'agenda' and moving further to the right in a futile and self destructive attempt to save the Labour Party. Against the class war politics of the bourgeoisie epitomised by Thatcher it seeks to employ a 1930s type Popular Front anti-'Thatcherite' alliance which will, it assures us, include Liberals, SDPers, and of course anti-'Thatcherite' Tories. And although all evidence points to these bourgeois parties being forced to attack the working class in more or less the same way as Thatcher simply because of the demands of a capitalism in crisis, as was the Wilson/Callaghan government, the logic of these neo-Pollitt/Seventh Congress politics forces the leadership to insist that the Pollitt/Seventh Congress-loving 'fundamentalists' in the Party are whipped into line so that the CPGB can perform its Euro designated role of acting as an accepted matchmaker of the anti-'Thatcherite' alliance. What this logic means is distancing ourselves from the traditions of working class militancy, totally breaking from the Soviet Union, and transforming the Party into a neo-Fabian 'think tank of the left' or in other words the liquidation of the Party.

Over the years the Party machine tops foun their rank and file support slowly but surely evaporating as the Party membership declined and polarised between the Euros and the open oppositionists. Faced with this, spurred on by broader political and economic developments, comrade McLennan and most of the Party bureaucracy threw their lot in with the Euros, hitching their organisational wagon to the petty bourgeois ideological horse. But this development deeply worried a section of the post-Pollitt leadership including most CP trade union functionaries. They had dark forebodings about the clowning antics of the Euros, considering them unattractive partners and certainly unattractive masters: they especially feared that a Euro dominated CPGB would ruin



their relationship with the broad labour movement, that is, the trade union and labour bureaucracy. As a result of this where they could they would bury the more far out Euro resolutions, conducting a behind closed doors campaign to moderate that demand, curb this excess.

But the recent dramatic organisational decline which threatens to drastically reduce the influence of the Party, throw many out of easy lifetime Party jobs, and indeed destroy entire structures built up over decades of patient work, means that new impetus has been given to the process of divergence in the old right opportunist post-Pollitt leadership and rumblings of discontent have been transformed into open rebellion.

Centrally, the prospect of *Morning Star* extinction and Euro moves to get their hands on it before it expired combined with a ready made centrist opposition to be won as rank and file supporters went to provide the raw materials for a deep schism that included in it elements from the highest echelons of the Party. So on one level the *Morning Star* rebellion reflects the decline of the Party in purely organisational terms — the fact that it has fewer and fewer members means that it has fewer and fewer sellers, means that there are fewer and fewer readers, etc.; but on other levels it is a reflection of worries about the growing power of the Euros, and as the *Morning Star* recruited the non-Straight Leftist centrists to its standard and looked to Moscow for finance it also included the Soviet Union question.

Some jump to the conclusion that the *Morning Star* rebellion is entirely positive but this is a grave mistake. For although the rebellion has resulted in some from the highest echelons of the Party leadership/machine breaking with the Euros and taking steps towards pro-Sovietism, they support the Soviet Union in the most cynical and diplomatic fashion; most damningly the *Morning Star* has taken important steps along the liquidationist path.

It is true that comrade Chater is fighting the Euros but on what platform, around what principles? The fact is that his survival plan does not rest on building a genuine Communist Party but on an Urbanite Mark 2, integrating the paper into the trade union and labour bureaucracy, and orientating it away from communist politics.

Until this direction is reversed we can only maintain our position of critical defence when the pro-*Morning Star* grouping is subject to Euro/McLennanite bureaucratic centralist attack; certainly we cannot offer comrade Chater our critical support as some have suggested we should.

Those who close their eyes to the liquidationist course being plied by comrade Chater, who ignore the PPPS Management Committee's statement branding the CPGB an "outside body", who argue that Chater is the lesser of two evils when compared to the Euros not only fool themselves but expose a remarkable lack of communist principles. The idea that politics is a matter of choices, choices between left and right Labourites, wet and dry Tories, or maybe even moderate and extreme fascists is the politics of the absurd: a negation of Marxist dialectics.

Our politics are dictated by a scientific assessment of the class struggle: the consciousness of the working class, the balance of class forces, and the objective situation and its demands. Such an approach has nothing to do with choices between the "lesser of two evils" or turning the clock of history back; we know that this type of politics can only end in bitter disappointment. The same must be said of the idea that all in the CPGB would be well if it was returned to the 'mainstream' of the world communist movement; it is not only a delusion — after all it has proved impossible to organise a world meeting of communist and workers' parties even

on the basis of the last meeting's "we're all against war" statement in 1969 — but it fails to confront the burning tasks presented to us communists by the crisis of British imperialism and the looming prospect of a new general crisis of capitalism.

This crisis demands that we look to building a Leninist vanguard Communist Party; halfway house measures just won't do. Certainly comrade Chater with his countless statements that he fully supports the transparently reformist 1978 *British Road*, his centrist supporters' 'positive' interpretation of it, the perspective of saving the *Morning Star* through handing it over to the trade union and labour bureaucracy, and the course away from communist politics epitomised by the statement that the CPGB was an "outside body" show that the pro-*Morning Star* grouping is both revisionist and liquidationist and most definitely not looking to building the party the unfolding period ahead demands. But does this mean that we assess the *Morning Star* rebellion as simply negative? The answer must be no, we do not.

The once 'monolithic' right opportunist CPGB is now a seething mass of tendencies and factions. It has a leadership which because of its extreme rightism and use of bureaucratic centralism, especially in London and the North West, is widely hated. And hatred has turned into audacious rebellion. The Straight Leftists, despite efforts by leadership thugs, bravely circulated their subversive *Congress Truth* to delegates at the 38th Congress along with their unprecedented Alternative List, thus breaking the Party machine's monopoly on information. What is more, in the wake of the closing of the London District Congress around 400 communists openly defied threats of bureaucratic discipline and attended the 'illegal' London advisers' aggregate. And perhaps most pleasingly all activists have been drawn into unheard of open debate in the new party press.

The official press is no more. Now there only exist factional publications. Now Party members often sell the *Morning Star* as an act of open defiance; a sort of political two fingers up to supporters of the leadership factions. And besides the old established publications a rash of new titles have come into existence, all voicing a particular factional point of view. Thus, as well as the old *Morning Star* and *Marxism Today* becoming overtly factional, there exists *Focus*, *Straight Left*, and *The Leninist*, polemical pamphlets like *Class Politics*, 'samizdat' sheets emanating from various shades and non-16 St John Street Party information bulletins, most notably the Straight Leftist monthly *Communist* and our own *National Bulletin*.

So while we must constantly warn of the dangers of liquidationism, it would be a monumental mistake to leave it there: the crisis in the CPGB has turned it into a flux. Conservative ideas are being put to the test and found wanting, fresh paths are being explored, sometimes boldly, sometimes tentatively. This means that with the correct strategy, in the heat of the inner-Party struggle there exists the possibility of shifting many in the opposition to the left and towards Leninism.

Of course movement will be uneven, there will be eddies and backwashes. Thus, while old stalwarts like comrades Chater, Costello, and Hicks have through their rebellion moved to the left their centrist backers have at least for the moment taken an important step to the right with all their talk of a 'positive' interpretation of the *British Road*. The result is also often contradictory; for example, in the statement of the London 22 following the EC's disciplinary action against them they negatively declared "allegations" against them that they "have not adhered" to the *British Road* "are refuted" by their work, but at the same time it was positively

maintained that "As communists" they would "continue to fight for the ideological position on which our Party was formed" and that the EC "is not defending democratic centralism. It is imposing bureaucratic centralism" (*Morning Star*, January 14 1985).

#### 4. How to build the Communist Party the working class needs

For Leninists the crisis in the CPGB is of monumental importance. The CPGB is no sect. Yes, it has a reformist programme and a social democratic approach to membership and organisation but within it are thousands who are fighting against this degeneration and who look to socialist revolution. What is more, the CPGB despite its steep decline is still the second largest workers' party in Britain, a major feature on the political map, and therefore a focal point of interest and attraction to all advanced workers. Above all it is an integral component part of the world communist movement and for those who take seriously slogans about world revolution this is a central question.

The strategy of *The Leninist* has never rested on reforming the CPGB; it is too far gone for that. So for us it is not a matter of rallying to opposition to win the "next" congress as the Straight Leftists have sought to do for the last fifteen years or so; such an approach will never build the revolutionary vanguard Communist Party our working class needs. Likewise we do not attempt to get back to some non-existent golden age, not of the early 1920s and certainly not of 1950s style Harry Pollitt/Joseph Stalin centrism. We must draw on the lessons of the past, especially the rich heritage of the Bolsheviks and the first four congresses of Comintern, but we must look forward.

This is why we have placed so much emphasis on developing our theory attempting to grasp the nature of the period we are living through and the nature of the period that lies ahead. In essence we have concluded that the foundations for social peace are inexorably decaying and that a sustained period of class war is opening up. Under these conditions not only is the demand for a revolutionary Communist Party going to come from the working class itself but the class struggle will throw up the raw materials for it. It is the strategy of *The Leninist* to draw together the spontaneous militancy of the working class and the ideological struggle we are fighting in the CPGB in order that the two synthesised will produce first a Leninist wing of the CPGB and then in line with the tempo of the class struggle a Leninist Communist Party.

It is the convergence of the militant working class with the forces of Leninism that provides the wedge with which to dislodge the genuine communist forces at present under domination of centrism from their factional masters. Of course success for our class relies not on winning a couple of thousand ex-centrists, what is absolutely vital is the ability of *The Leninist* to grow as a vanguard for the militant working class itself. If we do this but fail to win even one centrist a Leninist Party can still be built.

Because of this, while we consider open ideological struggle a central communist principle in our conditions it assumes a pivotal importance in our strategy. With it workers can come to understand the differences in the CPGB, what factions stand for what, and how their ideology and attitudes relate to the class struggle. Thus workers can be won to the Party not as green recruits but as open eyed, fully conscious partisans of Leninism.

Our strategy can be seen in embryonic form by our performance, slogans, and perspectives during the miners' Great Strike. While all other tendencies hardly stirred from their ideological and political stupor, *The Leninist* was very, very different. We had for some time been predicting a

strategic confrontation between the working class and the bourgeoisie; we had even developed a number of important though admittedly rather vague ideas about the likely immediate demands of the class struggle, including Workers' Defence Corps, Councils of Action, and the organisation of the Militant Minority in the working class. As a result when the strike broke, despite our relatively minute forces, lack of big money, and non-existent roots in the working class we were at least ideologically equipped for the ensuing year long strike.

Unlike the Euro/McLennanites, the *Morning Star*, and Straight Leftists we considered that communist leadership consisted of more than repeating the arguments from the NUM NEC about the importance of the *Plan for Coal*. Instead of this tailism we put forward the necessity of a strike wave of general strike proportions if the miners were to win; we urged other workers to fight for their sectional demands alongside the miners, to unite their struggles by aiming to smash the anti-trade union laws. We recognised the necessity for the militants to organise themselves independently of their reformist leaders, whether they be left or right, including in the NUM itself. As a result the call for a new National Minority Movement was a central question, especially when it became obvious that the TUC was not going to be forced to deliver more than paper support for the miners. These and other calls for the formation of Workers' Defence Corps, the transformation of the Miners' Support Committees into Council of Action type bodies, and a general strike — with or without the TUC flowed from the logic of the strike and strongly contrasted with the rest of the CPGB trends and the left in general.

Because of the outstanding role of supporters of *The Leninist* in Miners' Support Committees, the rushing around the country from picket line to miners' welfare to mass demonstration, and of course the ideological lead we sought to provide the circulation of our paper more than doubled during the year, and most importantly through securing links with the most advanced section of the working class, especially militant miners, we have taken important steps in transforming our organisation from a sect towards being a tendency firmly based on the working class.

This said, we are far from satisfied with our performance during the strike. Because of our lack of numbers and lack of initial contacts, we only managed to conduct a low level propaganda campaign, we only won contacts towards the very end of the strike, and our impact in real terms has been very marginal. But a step has been taken and with our tentative qualitative advance moves are now afoot which if successful will fuse *The Leninist* with the militant working class.

But despite our self criticisms we Leninists can be proud of the role we played during the miners' Great Strike, and not just because it stands in such marked contrast to the lamentable role of our ideological opponents in the Party but because we were able to unite theory with practice.

Comrades, the raw materials for a reformed Communist Party are being thrown up around us. Militant miners are coming to us demanding the building of a Leninist Communist Party. These miners know that no other party will do if they are to settle accounts with the arrogant Tories and the system which they serve.

Comrades, revolution is not a distant prospect, some far off dream; it is the ever more pressing solution for today's intractable capitalist crisis. Today is not 1926 or 1927. The miners' Great Strike is not the end of a period of militant class struggle but its heroic beginning. Now is the time to build *The Leninist* and its links with the working class. Now is the time to ensure victory for the coming British Revolution through reorganising the Communist Party.



## A brief survey

# "Eurocommunism"

Peter Butler

'COUNTERREVOLUTION' 'The ideas of the bourgeoisie within the communist movement.' Or even 'The new form of bourgeois workers' parties'. Such have been descriptions, of which this is a far from exhaustive list, given by many of those who have opposed the cancer of opportunism known as Eurocommunism, a cancer which encircles the world, from Japan to Finland, and from Italy to Australia.

The ideas from which Eurocommunism developed originate from other forms of opportunism. Indeed, Eurocommunist writers are keen to stress their historic roots in order to underline their plausibility with the doubtful. For example, the latter day leading Eurocommunist, Santiago Carrillo, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), traces his political ancestry back through Palmiro Togliatti to Georgi Dimitrov. Togliatti, leader of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) for forty years until his death in 1964, bridges the period from the Popular Front period of the world communist movement of the 1930s to the early manifestations of Eurocommunism as a new, separate current.

## Italy

Togliatti declared in an interview in 1956 that "today the internal political structure of the world communist movement has changed... there are countries in which they wish to find the way to Socialism without the Communist Party being in the lead." In a 1959 *Rinascita* article, Togliatti honestly characterised the 'defence' of bourgeois democratic dictatorships (as distinct from fascist bourgeois dictatorships) after the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1935 (its last): "This opened the way for alliances and collaborations, on condition that the social democrats and bourgeois politicians were not heaped all together, but that differentiations should be made among them and acted on accordingly. This direction was therefore not merely tactical, but strategic."



The PCI believes fervently in the freedom and democracy of bourgeois democratic dictatorships, and is concerned to put its energies into reforming it towards socialism. Again in the words of Togliatti: "The question arises of the possibility for the working classes to win positions of power, within the limits of a state that has not changed its bourgeois nature, and therefore whether it is possible to struggle for the progressive transformation of its nature from the inside."

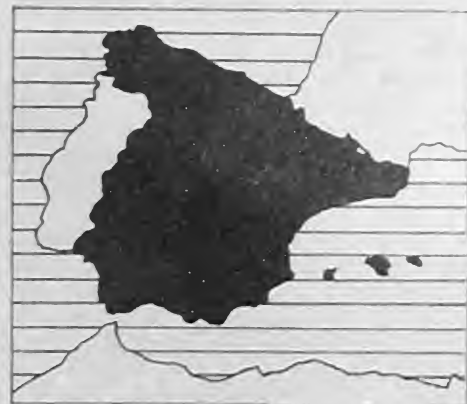
The PCI and its right opportunist leadership had already long before decided on the development of its ideology into what became the Eurocommunist stalking horse in the world communist movement.

Far from being a problem peculiar to Britain or Europe the ideology of what has come to be known as Eurocommunism manifests itself throughout the world.

The PCI seized on every rightist turn in the CPSU as justification, and incidentally gives us another example of the midwife role of the world communist movement's centrism towards Eurocommunism. "Kruschev had mentioned the new role that parliaments could play in a socialist transformation of society," but according to Italian Euro Giuseppe Boffa, "Togliatti... was able to point out in *Pravda* that in Italy the Italian Communist Party with its battle of 1953 had, in fact, defended the representative character of parliament." So far does this go that the PCI has even suggested that international meetings of the world's communist parties should also include social democrat and democratic organisations, especially since in the advanced capitalist countries the majority of the working class supports non-communist parties.

## Spain

That other leading light of Eurocommunism is the PCE. Its variant of Eurocommunism follows, painfully stressed in specific form, a Spanish road to... class collaboration. In general, however, the approach of the PCE is to do the same as any other Euro party or faction: appeal to the middle strata (including those staffing the repressive machinery of the state), and thus attempt to peacefully



penetrate the bourgeois state machine in order to democratise it and utilise it for progressive purposes. In other words, to reform it. Its touchstone of unreality is 'turning around' the ideological apparatuses of the bourgeois state. This is to be achieved by means of the seedcorn of Marxist ideas: sprouting is expected within the minds of the state's cadres quite soon, so they say.

The fact that the full blaze of bright eyed PCE attention is focused on the bourgeois state's minions has had little effect on these well paid, loyal servants of the bourgeoisie in Spain as elsewhere. It has, however, had a tremendous effect on the PCE and its members. Revolted by the PCE's class collaboration, thousands have left its ranks and attempted to set up anti-Eurocommunist parties. Enrico Lister, of Civil War fame, was first in the field with his Soviet-backed party in 1977. More recently (last year), another and larger alternative party was founded from amongst the most revolted sections of the PCE, including whole chunks of local organisations, and which now goes under the name of the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain.

## Japan

Despite objections to the categorisation of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) as Eurocommunist since it is an Asian party, its theoretical positions unequivocally place it in the same camp as Eurocommunism, and as a clear trend within the world

communist movement that is where it undoubtedly belongs. Undying hatred for the Soviet Union by Japan's bourgeoisie fuels the chauvinist stand



of the Euro-Nipponcommunist JCP towards the world revolutionary centre, and colours it in the tired hues of anti-Sovietism that it shares with the PCI, the PCE, and all the other Euros.

The JCP supports its bourgeoisie, Japanese imperialism, over its claim to Soviet territory in the Far East: the Kurile (Chishima) Islands. Since at least 1969 the JCP has "demanded that the Soviet Union return not only the southern Chishima Islands but the whole of the Chishima Islands, including the northern ones." (Tetsuzo Fuwa *Stalin and Great Power Chauvinism*, p.46) The Warsaw Treaty Organisation and NATO are equated by the JCP: it disavows the defence of the socialist system as somehow reflecting "the inward desire of great-power chauvinists to consolidate existing military blocs as a means of interference in the affairs of other countries." (*Ibid.*, p.81)

As for Afghanistan, the JCP wants the Red Army out, especially as now "the Soviet Union is in a similar situation to that of the British aggressors about 100 years ago, resulting from the resistance of the Afghan people against the occupation." (*Ibid.*, p.63)

However, the social chauvinism of the JCP has not gone unchallenged. In common with other parties with a wholly or largely Eurocommunist leadership the JCP has its factional opposition: in its case the Shiga faction.

## Australia

At the end of last year it was reported that the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) faced a serious split, with the resignation of twenty-three out of thirty-two members of its Victoria state committee and of eleven members of its Queensland state committee, and this with a membership already below 1,500 (from 25,000 in the 1940s).

The CPA was one of the first communist parties to break from the



post World War II consensus of the world communist movement and

scamper towards liberalism and neo-fabianism. In 1970, documents for the CPA's national congress clearly laid down preconditions for advance to socialism that our Party's Euros might recognise. And, in a formulation redolent of Carrillo's later one of "turning around" the bourgeois state's ideological apparatuses, these documents declare that "a revolutionary body of ideas which confront and challenge the prevailing ones (a 'counter-consensus') is of vital importance... the expansion of the state into various spheres of civil life and the increasing number of ordinary employees involved, make the state apparatus more open to disintegration from within as the 'counter' ideas and values strike a chord among the state employees themselves (including the army and police). (*The Road to Socialism*, p.7)

## Finland

The Communist Party of Finland has about 33,000 members, which makes it



the largest communist party in Scandinavia. Its Eurocommunists managed to secure the Party leadership at last year's congress. General Secretary of many years, Arvo Aalto, led the Euro assault, being rewarded with the Party Chair for his pains. The opposition then had control of half the Party's districts and thus the real possibility that an alternative party of anti-Eurocommunists could be viable. Calls from the opposition for an extraordinary congress have been shaken off by the Euro leadership as tantamount to calling for a split.

## Greece

Eurocommunism's foray into the less developed capitalist countries of Europe have been quite unsuccessful.



In Greece the Communist Party (KKE) split on a Euro/centrist basis during the fascist reign of the colonels (1967-1974): the Interior faction and the Exterior faction (many of whose cadres were in the socialist countries). The KKE-Interior (the Euros) achieved support at the time of the restoration of bourgeois democracy but Greece's working class soon found it unpalatable. It has now declined to a tiny rump, the KKE-Exterior having long overtaken it in terms of working class support.



The Euros celebrate 50 years of Popular Fronts but should we?

# Popular Fronts



Georgi Dimitroff, lionised by the Euros for introducing the Popular Fronts. But behind him and them was Joseph Stalin.

John Mann

THIS YEAR sees the 50th anniversary of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, held during 1935 in Moscow. At that historic event the world communist movement under the instigation of Stalin and Dimitroff finally dropped the policy of castigating social democracy as 'social fascism' and orientated itself towards building broad Popular Fronts against imperialist world war and fascism. In reality it was a major milestone in the emergence of opportunism and reformism within the communist movement, and as such will be celebrated by opportunists of all shades in our own Communist Party.

While both the *Morning Star* faction and *Straight Left* look back upon the Popular Front as a correct and positive if not the most formative period in their own political development, it is the Eurocommunists who are now using the legacy and 'orthodoxy' of Popular Frontism to strengthen their own grip on the Party machine against the growing opposition of other tendencies, which now have the majority support of Party activists. A number of articles have already appeared in *Marxism Today* by comrades David Priscott, Hywel Francis, and others drawing parallels between the anti-fascist Popular Fronts of the 1930s and the current Euro-strategy of building an anti-Thatcherite "broad democratic alliance" in Britain; and on March 23 the Euros staged their Popular Fronts Revisited event as the latest in line after the 'Left for Dead' and 'Moving Right' shows.

The significance of Comintern adopting Popular Frontism in 1935 rests in the fact that the Leninist programme of establishing revolutionary working class state power by means of soviets was superseded by the new official orthodoxy of winning power and building socialism through parliament. This thoroughly opportunist and reformist approach became more fully and clearly expressed in several Communist Party programmes after the Second World War, such as the *British Road to Socialism* of 1951, and Khrushchev's Report to the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956. Yet in the initial 1935 formulation, Popular Frontism was restricted to the task of constructing parliamentary alliances, not for supposedly building socialism, but for preventing the rise of fascism, most immediately in France and Spain. In this respect, such reformist cross-class alliances were called upon to not only encompass parties formally committed to "socialism", but also bourgeois parties opposed to socialism so long as they opposed fascism as

well.

For instance the widely respected scholar of Soviet and Comintern history, E.H.Carr, states in *The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War*:

"Long before the war in Spain reached its final stages, any ideological element that smacked of socialism or communism had been sedulously eliminated from the programme of the government ardently supported by the PCE (Communist Party of Spain) and Comintern; the programme indeed contained points directly opposed to communist doctrine. Nor was play any longer made with the theoretical argument that support for bourgeois democracy was a first stage on the road that led to a socialist revolution." (pp.84-85)

Furthermore, this premise is supported by Stalin's letter addressed to the left social democratic premier of Republican Spain Largo Caballero in 1936, in which Stalin advises the latter that:

"The leaders of the Republican Party should not be repulsed, but on the contrary, should be drawn in, brought nearer and associated with the common exercise of government. It is especially important that the government should secure the support of Azana (Republican Party leader) and his group and that everything should be done to help them in overcoming their vacillation. This is necessary in order to prevent the enemies of Spain from regarding it as a communist republic and to forestall their intervention..." (Ibid p.87).

It is this authoritative precedent of watering down communist policy to make it acceptable to a wide spectrum of bourgeois democratic opinion that the Eurocommunists particularly look to. For them it is not the necessity of leading the working class through struggle towards the aim of socialist revolution which determines strategy, but the reformist desire to make the class struggle for workers respectable in the eyes of the influential middle strata and ultimately of the ruling class itself.

To underpin their strategy of moving to the right, of joining forces with the centre left Kinnockites within the Labour Party against Bennism and of securing reformist alliances with bourgeois liberal forces both inside and outside Parliament, the Eurocommunists argue that Thatcherism signifies something qualitatively different. They imply that Thatcherism poses a threat akin to fascism, although obviously not to the same degree, but sufficient enough to warrant building an alliance of forces based purely upon the objective

of replacing Thatcher with a new Labour government, possibly in coalition with the SDP/Liberals and Tory 'wets'. This is their motive for drawing close parallels with the Popular Front of the 1930s.

Yet although the Popular Front and the Euro's anti-Thatcherite alliance are both reformist, it would be a mistake to equate the motive behind them as the same. The Popular Front, despite the degree to which communist parties promoted rightist policies as appeasement to liberals and 'anti-fascist' conservatives, remained within the framework of centrism. Centrism's primary aim remained then, as now, the defence of the Soviet Union above all else. On the other hand, the Eurocommunists' move to the right is primarily motivated by that tendency's shift away from the communist tradition and even Labour reformism altogether, as it roots itself more in the radical soil of middle class Fabianism.

The centrists' opposition around *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star* do not oppose the legacy of Popular Frontism in principle. They both work in the spirit of the Popular Front to forge reformist and pacifist alliances between the labour movement and movements based on the middle strata like the Greenham Common Women and CND, primarily because they see this as the means of lessening the imperialist war threat against the Soviet Union. But there is a difference between centrism in the 1930s and the centrism in Britain today. Centrism in the Communist Party today is far more entrenched in the tradition of labour reformism, having attempted to implement the *British Road to Socialism* for over 30 years and thus sees the Labour Party as central to the defence of the Soviet Union as well as a strategy for winning socialism. Both *British Road to Socialism* and the *Morning Star* refer to the Labour Party as the "mass party of the working class", both seek to unite with it in one form or another and to 'reform' it in order to establish a truly 'socialist' Labour government.

Contrary to those reformist illusions which these opportunists never cease to fire peddling however, the Labour Party is not simply a working class party as Lenin long ago pointed out in answer to very similar arguments; the Labour Party encapsulates within its programme, its leadership and its very character a cross-class alliance between the labour bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. Whenever the Labour Party has governed, and it has done so five times this century, it has governed on behalf of the capitalist class. The argument by the Charterites in their pamphlet *Class Politics* that only politics based on the labour movement, meaning the Labour Party, constitute "working class politics" and that only the Euro-strategy is class collaborationist is a pure and utter deception. Of course Eurocommunist reformism is more rightist, more solidly based upon liberalism and is becoming more

divorced from the labour movement, but in essence, its strategy for a government of "popular unity" is more reformist or class collaborationist than any Labour government in the past.

The real difference between the Eurocommunists and the centrist opposition lies in the latter's adherence to a reformist strategy based on the labour bureaucracy whereas the former is drawn more to reformist political movements centred upon the radical middle classes, such as feminism and pacifism, the centrists have no ideological objections to feminism or pacifism so long as they are contained within the framework of labour reformism.

To counter the Popular Frontist arguments of the Eurocommunists without completely disavowing support for Popular Frontism in principle, the centrists simply argue that Thatcherism is not fascism, implying that only a genuine fascist threat could justify an overt alliance with liberalism on a 'non-socialist' programme.

For Leninism, the important point of controversy surrounding the Popular Fronts is not so much correctness of forming cross-class alliances or any other type of alliance; the sticking point is the revolutionary or reformist character of such alliances. Communist parties have carried through revolutions in alliance with the petty bourgeois, from the Russian to the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions. But in all these cases where socialism was established, such class alliances were based on a genuine revolutionary struggle and were led by the working class in the form of the Communist Party. The alliances established in Spain during the 1930s, in Chile during the 1970s, and in France in the 1980s, however, all witnessed the participation of communists in government on a reformist constitutional parliamentary basis. In Spain and Chile the Communist Party moved to the right of the left social democrats during the course of the Popular Front/Unity rule in an effort to retain the flagging support of left bourgeois parties, but paid the price in being unable to build working class unity of support for parliamentary rule. Whereas the Bolsheviks were able to fire the working class with enthusiasm and to win them as one from all other parties, because the Bolshevik cause amounted to working class power, the communists in Chile and Spain found themselves unable to win over the militant workers in the anarchist and socialist organisations, who by the logic of an intensifying period of class conflict were being hurled to the left, towards the necessity of transcending bourgeois legality, which the Communist Party still doggedly defended, and seizing state power direct.

Opportunists and centrists often argue that to disavow Popular Frontism completely means reverting back to the sectarian policy of castigating social democrats as 'social fascists'. This is totally untrue. Leninists severely criticise the 1928-34 period when this was implemented as having severely damaged the communist movement, isolated it from the working class masses, and laid the ground for the ideological retreat into reformist Popular Frontism. We look to the work of the Communist Party in its initial period up to 1926, when it built links with militant workers and Labour Party supporters through the agency of militant class organisations, namely the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and the National Minority Movement.

Today the experience of the year-long miners' Great Strike has shown that the revolutionary beginnings of the 1920s can be and must be revived and developed. Unlike the General Strike, the 1984-85 miners' strike is not the end by the first stage of a new wave of rising militant class struggle. Now more than ever it is imperative that communists reject the reformist tradition of Popular Frontism which has grasped our Party for so long and of which the *British Road to Socialism* is the most clear bankrupt expression.



## REVIEWS

## The militants organised



Executive Committee of the National Minority Movement, *What the Minority Movement stands for*, 1924, pp.14, one old penny.

AT A TIME when the leaders of the Labour Party and TUC have been exposed as the scabs they are, the 'big bang' talkers shown to be windbags, it is timely to look back to the 1920s and the brilliantly successful National Minority Movement.

This pamphlet, produced after the second meeting of the National Minority Movement executive in November 1924, outlines the nature of the organisation and its aims in a simple and immediately accessible way.

Significantly the NMM was preceded by the Miners' Minority Movement which, first established in the militant South Wales Area of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, soon spread throughout the coalfields. It inspired the formation of sister organisations in the engineering industry — the Metal Workers' Minority Movement, and in transport — the Transport Workers' Minority Movement.

It was on the initiative of the Communist Party that these Minority Movements were built and then in August 1924 brought together to form the National Minority Movement itself. But it was far from a simple front for the CPGB; under the umbrella of the NMM there were organised hundreds of thousands of workers, those "progressive minorities in all working class organisations". (p.8)

The objects of the NMM were explicitly revolutionary: it was opposed to "social peace and class collaboration and the delusion of a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism" (p.11) and it aimed for "an understanding of the international struggle between the capitalist class and the working class" (p.13).

The NMM came into existence as a result of a growing wave of militant class struggle which burst out in 1910, and while this wave was depressed by the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 it regained momentum at the end of the war reaching a peak in the nine days of the General Strike in 1926. Working class militants were determined to not only defend their living standards and rights but to advance them to the point of overthrowing capitalism and "the establishment of the Socialist

Commonwealth" (p.11). But these militants found themselves blocked in this aim by "the leadership of the trade union movement... the trade union bureaucracy;" their "check on the efforts of the workers on their forward movement" necessitated the formation of the Minority Movement (p.10).

Far from being some artificial transplant onto the working class it was therefore "a natural growth from the working class organisations" (p.9). As a result it grew rapidly. At its second Annual Conference in September 1925 it could boast of 683 delegates representing 750,000 workers (out of a TUC membership of some 5 million). It thus became the focal point for all working class militants and rightly feared by the bourgeois state and the trade union fat cats alike.

But the NMM was in no way aimed at dividing and weakening the existing trade unions, in fact the opposite was the case: "The Minority Movement in the trade unions aims at building up and strengthening and re-organising the existing trade union organisations of the workers and inducing those organisations to seriously fight for the interests of the workers, and to carry on the class struggle ... It is *not* a separatist movement. It does *not* aim at bringing into being new rival organisations" (p.8 original emphasis).

The NMM's policy included particular proposals designed to strengthen and expand the fighting capacity of unions. It called for the broadening of the Trades Councils to include representatives from all *bona fide* working class organisations, including co-ops, political parties, and Factory Committees. It called upon workers to organise Factory or Workshop Committees to cut across the narrow craft divisions rife at the time. Likewise it campaigned for industrial unionism and against the poisonous sectionalism which pervaded the class then as now.

One major weakness of the NMM's policy (and the Communist Party's) was its emphasis on concentrating power in the General Council of the TUC as some kind of 'general staff' of the class, a position that was to become exposed during the General Strike.

The NMM reached its peak during the General Strike itself, achieving an affiliated membership of approaching one million and playing a leading role in politicising and organising the strike. It was soon, however, to be effectively finished as a mass organisation after the TUC and major union leaderships began the disaffiliation of Trades Councils affiliated to the NMM and the banning of NMM and Communist Party membership in the unions in the wake of the General Strike's defeat. But not only was the NMM attacked from the reactionary labour bureaucrats but was later also undermined by the truly sectarian line of the Comintern and hence the Communist Party after 1928.

Nevertheless, up until its real demise in 1927 (it did just about stay alive till 1929) it was a genuine mass organisation of rank and file militants whose role was to unite militants to wage an openly anti-capitalist struggle in defence of the unions and living standards and for a struggle for socialism. Though short lived it provides us today with a fine example of how to organise an alternative, not to the unions themselves but to the bureaucrats who refuse to mobilise for the struggle.

This pamphlet ought to be reprinted and made available to the new generation of militants who have emerged in the course of the 1984-5 miners' Great Strike. In their hands not only could a new NMM type organisation be built but taken to a higher form.

John Miller

## Principle above discipline



Cemil Silahtar, *Party Discipline*, İşçinin Sesi publications, September 1979, pp64, £1.00.

THE CPGB is in crisis, perhaps on the threshold of disintegration. This fact is reflected by the unprecedented factionalisation of the Party. Given this, the biggest factionalists of them all — the leadership — is trying to bludgeon the rest of us into submission under the guise of 'democratic centralism'. This book by our comrades in the Leninist wing of the Communist Party of Turkey (the İşçinin Sesi wing) was written at a time when they were fighting opportunists in their Party on the question of Party discipline and is extremely useful not least because it analyses what genuine democratic centralism is. This is something Party members need reminding of as it has been absent from the CP for a very long time.

The leadership of our Party claim to act according to democratic centralism, a claim that has become increasingly shrill as the opposition has become more open and vocal. The fact that the most keen advocates of this discipline have been the Euros, who not so long ago dismissed this form of organisation as 'Stalinist', should give us a clue to the veracity of this claim. Indeed, their use of the term democratic centralism is a complete sham and is exposed as such in the EC's draft resolution to the Special Congress where they openly argue that rules stand above principle:

"The argument that the fight for what some comrades regard as a correct political line takes precedence over rules and procedures is potentially disastrous for our Party... (...)

"Congress insists that there can be no room in our Party for those who base their actions on the view that their political disagreements with Congress and Executive Committee decisions are of such a character as to entitle them to break the rules and disregard democratic centralism."

This is a total distortion of genuine democratic centralism; it is better referred to as bureaucratic centralism where mouths are gagged and discipline is based on the fear of expulsion. This is a mockery of Lenin's concept of democratic centralism, the true essence of which is captured by comrade Silahtar:

"Democratic centralism is a fundamental organisational principle which comprises the dialectical unity of democracy and centralism. Centralism is required to form an organisation which strikes simultaneously as one fist; democracy is required to ensure that the blows are struck on the correct principles." (p.15, our emphasis.)

Thus, without principle, discipline is meaningless. Unprincipled unity such as the leadership is advocating can only be enforced by bureaucratic methods. Effectively the Party has become a piece of private property where the opportunists only "reduce discipline to vulgar centralism robbing it of its ideological essence." (p.27)

Lenin was fully committed to genuine democratic centralism to the extent that on many occasions he insisted on oppositionists being represented on leading bodies, most notably the Left Communists in 1918 and the Workers' Opposition in 1921. Such a principled position finds no parallel in our Party where opposition forces have consistently been denied representation and even been expelled. The Party leadership have determined that those in opposition who act according to their principles have no place in the Party.

Leninist discipline only exists as a means of putting into practice revolutionary principles and theory. For opportunists on the other hand discipline is either a great burden if they are not the ones imposing it or a tool to defeat the opposition with if they have control. The logic of opportunist discipline is 'I don't like your views so I'll punish you'. An example of such an opportunist understanding of discipline was provided by the Mensheviks. When they seized the party leadership in the wake of the RSDLP's Second Congress they not only prevented open criticism but censored Lenin's articles and banned his books. Lenin and the Bolsheviks behaved in a diametrically opposite manner.

As comrade Silahtar puts it "the open struggle in the party both safeguards the purity of revolutionary theory and ensures that unity of action is on the correct basis. Since the Bolsheviks maintained this safeguard to the end, they were able to defeat all opportunist views and lead the revolution to victory. Such is Bolshevik iron discipline." (p.28)

In the Leninist sense the opposition are guilty of indiscipline when they remain silent against the leadership's diktat. This is a pit which the Straight Leftists have fallen into — their lack of principle has led them to abide by Euro discipline, even if it has meant scabbing on other oppositionists. In reality this tendency, the self proclaimed 'hard left' of the Party, accept the leadership's discipline as democratic centralism and would use it in the same manner given half the chance.

True Leninists have no time for such corruptions of communist principles. Unlike those who ban views they cannot argue against, Leninists will expose opportunist views with the confidence that their position is a correct and principled one, for as Lenin said, "honesty in politics is the result of strength; hypocrisy is the result of weakness." (Lenin, CW, Vol.17, p.166).

At the moment the only freedom of ideas that exists in the Party is for reformist ideas. Unity around such reformism is bureaucratic unity and it is our duty to rebel against it. When the Mensheviks seized control of the RSDLP a revolutionary worker wrote to Lenin in a spirit all genuine communists would do well to heed: "Could the opportunists?" he asked "be allowed to predominate in the ideological leadership? What could we... do if that happened, would we have to agree to it? No, it would be our duty to take away its rights to predominate and give that right to a different body; and if that were not done for any reason, whether a sense of Party discipline or anything else, we would all deserve to be called traitors to the Social Democratic [communist — GD] workers' movement" (quoted in VI Lenin CW Vol. 7 p.137, our emphasis.)

Thus it is axiomatic that there can be no genuine democratic centralism without revolutionary principle. As comrade Silahtar puts it "clearly, it is not indiscipline to fight for the protection of the correct ideology." Comrades it is our right and our duty.

Geraldine Duffy



## THE EUROCOMMUNISTS AND THE MINERS' STRIKE

# Of druids, charity, and condolences

Mike Bourne &  
Ian Mahoney

"Britain's road to socialism will be our own road. The fact that it will be different from that taken in other countries is due not only to the specific position within Britain but to the changes in the world brought after the October Revolution in Russia, in 1917... the path of the revolution, insurrection and the creation of the Soviets as organs of power... were determined by the particular conditions and background of Tzarist autocratic rule, counter-revolution and civil war and imperialist intervention." (From the *British Road to Socialism*, Programme of the Communist Party, pp 36-37.)

The miners have dropped a concrete post on the *British Road to Socialism*. The claims of various Euro comrades in the Communist Party that the miners' strike is in some mysterious way a "living vindication" of the *British Road to Socialism* (BRS) are as weak and unconvincing as they are now hysterical. Today there is a sharp sound in the air: it is the sound of consensus breaking up. The disintegration of post-war social peace that first the election of Thatcher and now the epic battle of the miners have marked are in stark contrast to the cosy semi-detached-from-reality world that the 'boom-baby' Eurocommunist trend has painted of Britain since 1945. Rather than desert their politics however, the heroic miners and their struggle have prompted the Euros to all but desert the workers' movement itself.

Initially, the Eurocommunists were at pains to present the miners' strike as a purely economic affair, even though this position was frequently contradicted openly by the NUM leadership. While Arthur Scargill could assure 45,000 cheering miners in Mansfield that their strike would "pave the way for a transformation and roll back the years of Thatcherism," Pete Carter, the Communist Party's ineffectual Euro Industrial Organiser, was peddling a rather more wimpy line to the May 1984 Executive Committee meeting:

"Any projection of the strike as a political strike aimed at bringing down the government will be of no help to the miners — quite the reverse." (See *The Leninist* no.9)

The Eurocommunists refused to comprehend that the government attack on the miners was not the result of Thatcher's mentality, rabidly anti-working class though it is; rather it is an expression of the crisis affecting British and world capitalism. Capital is forced to attack the most traditionally militant section of the working class in order not merely to ease privatisation in the coal industry (to open up a limited new market for capital), but more importantly to bring about a major general shift from labour to capital. The miners were the first battle in a war to drive down the wages of the entire working class.

When finally the Euros were forced to concede that the strike was political — that it was 'made political by Thatcher' in fact — it was the cue for them not to raise demands that would mobilise the class as a class in support of the miners, but to start to wheel out their soppy liberal friends in order to try to make the strike tame and 'respectable'. Generally this long and bloody battle has been an embarrassment to the Euros. The only really positive thing to come out of the entire sorry affair as far as they are



If he fought back the Euros would condemn him.

concerned seems to have been the pompously named Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities, a Popular Front-type clot heavily influenced and inspired by the Euro-dominated Welsh Communist Party. Nowadays, Wales lives on its traditions: the militancy that made it a bedrock of British communism has in many ways been diverted, reflected in the political and organisational degeneration of the Communist Party. This Wales Congress was an attempt to pull together a 'broad alliance' of the NUM, CP, the Labour Party, with those well-known class fighters in the church and the type of 'little Wales' nationalists and reactionaries who staff Plaid Cymru and who prance about Eisteddfod fields in bard's robes.

Despite the supposed diversity of the political forces involved in this Eurocommunist dream come true, Hywel Francis proudly reported in *Marxism Today* of February 1985:

"Its steering committee embraces all these organisations and meets weekly to discuss strategy. As yet there are remarkably few differences over tactics or politics."

Perhaps if the days returned when Druids could, according to the Emperor Claudius, summon up magical mists and winds then they may have been of some use to Welsh miners on picket lines. Today however, they are worse than useless. The Wales Congress set as its aims essentially the defence of "Welsh" mining communities and to co-ordinate and increase fund-raising. Comrade Francis in his *Marxism Today* article decries the "old fashioned trade union solidarity" as "syndicalist". Quite how a rotten clot of tin-rattling Eurocommunists, nationalists, and clergy who are positively hostile to winning industrial solidarity from other sections of the working class movement were supposed to deliver the goods was never quite clear. As the vast majority of miners knew, the only way the miners were going to achieve victory was through winning meaningful industrial solidarity from other workers. The role of the Eurocommunists, through the agency of this Wales Congress and more generally was to prostrate the militancy of the miners before 'public' (i.e. bourgeois) 'opinion' and to make them the objects not of solidarity but of charity.

When, in particular, young miners fought back against the police onslaught and built barricades and defended their communities with petrol bombs and catapults, the Eurocommunists maintained an awkward and embarrassed silence. A few, like the remarkably unsubtle comrades Janie Glen and Bea 'the Brit' Campbell broke ranks and spoke out prematurely against the "male" violence of both sides but the case of the scab taxi driver Wilkie provided the Euros with a chance to rehearse their condemnations as a tendency. The

Welsh Party, with sickening predictability joined the hysterical bourgeois press onslaught on the embattled miners, denouncing the Wilkie attack as "senseless" and having "no place in the legitimate struggle of the miners" and the leading committee of the Euro dominated Young Communist League voted by 13 votes to 11 to "express its condolences" to the scab lovers' widow. As far as we are aware, no similar gestures were made to the families of Jo Green or Davie Jones.

Our position on Wilkie and the general issues of miners' violence is clear. We unconditionally supported the miners using any means necessary to win their strike. Wilkie and his ilk took sides in the battle and objectively joined the ranks of those who would have starved miners' children to drive their fathers back to work. The lucky Wilkie and his kind can expect no sympathy from us: he got what he deserved.

The need for the left wing of the Communist Party to be clear and unambiguous on miners violence now is an urgent necessity. The strike has been defeated and the Euro knives are out. Pete Carter has already declared open season on militant miners in *Marxism Today* of March 1985.

"... there should have been an early condemnation of violence from whichever quarter it came..." (p30).

Without this, of course, we risk frightening away the valuable support from "the bishops and churches..." that has done so much to aid workers' struggles in the past (let's not forget good old Father Gapon). The Bishop of Durham really does not look good in red, therefore the strike had to be draped in the union flag and presented as a struggle in the 'national interest'.

"The miners are fighting to defend one of the nation's richest assets and to ensure that Britain has a future energy policy secure from outside influence..." (Pete Carter *Focus* Thursday February 21 1985).

While the Euros become ensnared in imperialism's war plans and fret about the security of 'our' industry, the miners as far as we are concerned were fighting for their class not some non-existent and reactionary notion of the 'national interest'.

The class struggle has passed the Euros and their BRS bible by: if the opposition in the Communist Party continue to claim adherence to the same reformist positions and programme as the Euros, then irrelevance will be their fate also. Nowhere has this truth been better illustrated than by the Women Against Pit Closures movement. Working class women have been a great disappointment to the feminists. Quite clearly the wives, mothers and daughters of striking miners saw the issue as one of class, not sex. When a journalist from the *Irish Post* interviewed women from Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures,

all except one (who was a Euro anyway) denied that they were feminists or that feminism had had any influence over them. The Euro-feminists are all too aware of their isolation from the embryonic working class women's movement and they have been reduced almost to petulance in insisting that they indirectly inspired the heroic women of the mining communities! Comrade Tricia Davis in *Focus*, January 17 1985 stamps her foot and whines 'But we are relevant!':

"The growth of a women's movement in the coalfields... would have been inconceivable without the changes brought about in the women's confidence and in the circumstances of women by the women's liberation movement."

This really is absolute humbug. To suggest that the 'floppy' tactics and middle class politics of the Women's 'Liberation' Movement have had any influence on the women of the mining communities is an insult to these women and their struggle. What comes across most strongly from the Euro-feminists' references to the miners' wives is certainly not the idea of common struggle or interest: no, what comes across is fear. They fear a working class woman awakened to her class interests and fighting alongside not her middle class 'sisters' but shoulder to shoulder with her working class brothers. After all, if you had the same class basis as the feminists and their Women's 'Liberation' Movement, wouldn't you fear working class women also?

No doubt in the coming weeks we shall grow tired of hearing the leadership of the Communist Party crowing about its production of leaflets and posters and the nationwide "tour of coalfields" McGahey McLennan roadshow. However, we must remember that the production of literature supporting the miners is a duty, not an achievement. As for the "coalfields tour", if there were no Communist Party members prominent in the NUM would there still have been a coalfields' tour? The YCL is in a sense a trailblazer for the party: where it leads the Party Euros will eventually follow. Thus it is worth bearing in mind its pathetic role in this strike and the fact that it attaches no more significance to this strategically important struggle than it does to the petty bourgeois wallies still encamped at Greenham Common or that bureaucratic bore, Youth CND. The Euros hate and have contempt for the working class and their struggles. The working class will learn to hate the Euros with equal venom.

Those elements in the Communist Party who still look to the working class and socialist revolution should cut their losses as far as the Euros are concerned. The opposition should start to address itself to the real issues in the class. We can assure comrades that the miners' strike has not set militants' tongues wagging about an electoral alliance with the SDP or the vital importance of Proportional Representation or even the burningly relevant lessons of Greenham Common for the picket lines. The real issue is the need to provide our class with the weapons it needs to start to challenge for state power; that is the lesson of the miners' strike and that is the task that so far only *The Leninist* has even started to address itself to.

DUMP THE EUROS!

DUMP THE BRS!

TAKE THE STRUGGLE FOR A  
LENINIST COMMUNIST PARTY  
INTO THE WORKING CLASS!